Dark Treasure

Roy J. Snell

The Radiophone Boys Stories

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By

ROY J. SNELL

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DARK TREASURE

CHAPTER I

THE MYSTERIOUS WHALER

"Listen!" Curlie Carson held up his hand for silence.

At once, save for a strange, distant sound, the launch and the fog-bound sea was silent as a cave.

"That sound now, what is it?" Curlie Carson asked himself. The same question was on the lips of Joe Marion and Gladys Ardmore. Their crew was asking the same question, at least some of them. Others, because of long years of Arctic whaling, knew the sound; yet even to these there was mystery in it.

Faint at first, like the murmur of a distant waterfall, the sound of rushing water increased in volume until all the breathless fog-ridden air was filled with it.

"It—why, it's some mad craft! She'll run us down sure!" Curlie exclaimed, leaping to his feet.

Kennedy, the gray whiskered mate who sat at the tiller, did not move so much as a finger.

The next moment, with a wild whirl of foam, the thing was upon them; or at least it seemed so as they saw it burst through the curtain of fog that surrounded them. In truth, even as they sat there, the indistinct form came abreast of them, then shot by with the speed of the wind.

"A whale!" gasped Gladys.

"What luck!" Curlie's hand was on the fly wheel of the gasoline motor. He gave it a whirl. The engine popped. But the gray whiskered seaman pulled Curlie to his seat and the engine coughed and died.

"Now wha—what d'y' do that for?" Curlie stuttered. "We might have—have—"

"Dark treasure, sure enough," said Kennedy, "but not for us." He pointed calmly at the spot where the whale had broken the overhanging curtain of fog. Even as Curlie looked—and they all looked—the curtain was split again, this time by the prow of a whaleboat, very evidently being towed at a terrific speed.

A few brief seconds gave them a view of this strange craft, but those seconds left them staring.

In the prow of that whaleboat—a strange looking, hand-made affair with no power save that of the oars and paddles—sat a massive giant, a veritable Moses of a man who looked straight ahead and, turning his eyes neither to right nor left, saw not one of them.

It seemed probable that none of his mysterious crew saw the boat they so swiftly passed.

"A—a white man," whispered Joe.

"A ghost," murmured Curlie.

"One white ghost and six black ones," supplemented Kennedy, smiling.

It was true. The occupants of that strange whaleboat which, fastened to a mammoth bow-head whale was being towed through the water at terrific speed, were one white man and six men of ebony hue. The features of the blacks were not those of the Southern States, but rather of some unknown tropical island.

"Cannibals," suggested Joe.

"In the Arctic?" scoffed Kennedy. "With a white man? No."

"That white man!" said Gladys Ardmore, with difficulty suppressing a shudder. "The look on his face! What was it? Blind?"

"No."

"Well then, deaf perhaps. Something like that. It must be so."

"Question is, where'd they come from?" said Curlie. "There's not a whaler in these waters save our own *Sea Bear* and the *Adler*. We've seen their crews. Nothing like that there."

"No, nor anywhere else on the seven seas," rumbled Kennedy.

"Question is, will we see them again?" said Joe.

"We will!" said Kennedy. "In the Arctic you always meet again. The place is small, shut in. You can't travel widely. You always meet again—that is, unless you visit Davey Jones and go to eatin' clams with the walrus at the bottom of the sea, which here's hopin' for us—not!"

"How are we to get out of this fog?" asked Curlie.

"Wait for a breeze," answered Kennedy. "There's no other way."

Once more the silent Arctic fog, which so often hangs off the coast of Alaska and Siberia, closed in upon them. The boat, which for a time was rocked by the wake of the great whale, settled back upon the water and all was still. No one moved. No one spoke. It was as if the great white ghost of the skipper and his ebony crew had awed them into hushed silence.

Curlie Carson, who had been managing the motor, sat close to it now. Kennedy, at the tiller, sat with folded arms. In the prow was the harpooner, Soquina, an Eskimo they had picked up at Cape Prince of Wales. Amidship sat Gladys Ardmore, a girl in her late teens, and an Eskimo girl, Attatak, and two other Eskimo men and one white seaman.

Coiled in two great tubes, well forward, were fathoms upon fathoms of rope. One end of this was fastened to a steel barbed harpoon which projected from the mouth of a cannon-like affair with a pistol grip.

They were out for whales; something of a trial trip for this crew, to be sure, but out for them just the same. Before the fog had fallen, hope had run

high. Very early in the day they had sighted a small school of the black sea monsters, but had lost them. After that had come the fog. Somewhere off in that fog lay their ship, the staunch whaler, *Sea Bear.*

As Curlie sat there waiting for the fog to lift, he smiled a little at thought of the circumstances that had led up to the events of the past few hours. What had been the driving motives that had brought them so far from sunny climes and set them searching cold dark waters and ice piles for the black monsters of the deep? Romance? The love of adventure? The hope of gain for themselves or others? An old man's fancy? Perhaps part of all these. At any rate here they were.

Gladys Ardmore's father, in his youth, had sailed on a clipper ship in search of whales in these very waters. Recently he had learned of a modern whaler, the *Sea Bear,* which might be bought and refitted for a modest sum. Acting upon impulse, he had bought it. Since he had prospered in business, he could well afford to enter into a seafaring adventure. Moreover, his doctor had advised it. So, after seeking out his friend of other days, who was now a retired

sea captain, and as many of his old crew as they could muster, he had prepared for one more cruise in the Arctic.

Having taken a lively interest in the affairs of Curlie Carson and Joe Marion, who had at one time rendered him a particularly valuable service, he had persuaded them to go along. Of course his nature loving and venturesome daughter was not to be left behind. So here they all were, well up into the Arctic—much too far, in fact, to suit their aged skipper, for whales had been scarce. Only one whale, and that a small one, had fallen to their harpoon guns and already the season was passing.

"Kennedy," said Curlie suddenly, "did you ever hear of a man taming a whale?"

"Make a pet of him?" the old seaman asked with a smile.

"Yes, or a—well, perhaps sort of a horse—a sea-horse."

"You mean to say you think—"

"I didn't say," Curlie smiled queerly. "That old man looked odd enough to have anything for a horse—even a whale."

"'T'wouldn't be a bad idea," the old man mused. "That is, if it could be done, which I'm mighty sure it couldn't. Hard to keep him from bumpin' his head against the bottom now and then and taking you with him, boat and all. Hard to steer—couldn't be steered."

"But man, think what a decoy a tame whale'd make!" insisted Curlie. "Lead you right straight up to all the whales in the sea!"

"Fog's lifting," said the Eskimo harpooner.

"Blo-o-o! Blo-o-o! There she blows!" exclaimed the seaman.

"Where away?" Kennedy rose in his place.

"Off the port bow, sir."

At once all was motion and excitement. The hunt was on.

"Quick! The motor! Blo-o-o! Blo-o-o! There she blows."

The all but silent put-put-put of the motor sounded. The race was on.

"There she sounds!"

"He's gone."

"There! There she blows! Hard to port. There

now, after him! Run him down! He's up for air. He's blowed a dozen times. Takes seventy blows to fill his blood with oxygen. Hold hard after him. There he sounds. Down he goes. Not for long. Wait. There he is. After him!" The eyes of Kennedy, the veteran whale man, shone with silent joy as with low, tense tones he directed the chase.

So excited were Curlie and Gladys that their seats seemed made of bouncing India rubber. Even the Eskimos were excited. Of them all, only Soquina, the harpooner, sat motionless, staring straight ahead.

Then suddenly, without warning, they bumped.

"The—the whale!" Gladys stammered.

"Give it to him! Give him the steel, Soquina!" Kennedy, standing up, shot out his commands.

The small cannon popped. The harpoon flew. Came the singing sound of flying rope, the smoke of burning wood and scorching hemp and after that from beneath the sea sounded a dull boom.

"Got him!" muttered Kennedy, gripping his hands in his excitement. "There he sounds!"

After a wild, straight ahead race, the monster, head down, flukes up, had sunk.

"The rope! The rope! Watch out!"

Kennedy spoke too late. An Eskimo, coming afoul of the singing rope, went flying overboard to disappear beneath the water. The second he appeared above the water he was dragged aboard. Not an instant too soon. Soquina threw a loop around a post on the bow and the boat, cutting the water with a white foamy splash, shot ahead like mad.

Curlie watched all this with intense interest. It was his first whale. The barbed point of the harpoon which had been shot from the gun was now fast embedded in the body of the whale. A bomb, set off by a time fuse, had been exploded. Had it entered the whale's body? Had the whale received his death blow? Was this his last mad rush? Who could answer.

Still the boat sped on. A mile, two miles, three. The whale, now sounding, now beating the black waters to foam, still dragged away at that long rope.

Then of a sudden, as fogs have a way of doing in the Arctic, the white curtain came down again, denser than before.

Blotting out miles of black waters, it hid the whale from his pursuer. But still he plunged on.

If it had seemed strange to be moving forward so rapidly before, what must it seem to be hurled on into an impenetrable wall of white!

Hardly a moment passed when, with a wild cry of fear, Gladys sprang back. Within three feet of her head, like the marble wall of a mighty sepulcher, had passed a white mass of ice.

"Ice!" exclaimed Kennedy in consternation. "Cut! Cut!"

"No! No!" Soquina stayed the hand that would have severed the rope and lost them the whale forever. "No! No!" He made a downward pass with his hands to indicate that the whale was slackening his speed.

It was true. Scarcely ten seconds had elapsed when the serpentine coils of rope, drawn in by the eager Eskimos, lay about the boat on every side.

"What you think?" whispered the seaman. "Is he dead?"

Kennedy did not answer. Turning to the Eskimo, he said; "Haul away there. Haul away."

The next moment the dripping rope came coiling back into its tub.

Still the fog hung low over the silent sea. Still

there came no further movement from the whale. It was strange, mysterious, haunting, this sitting there in the fog, while somewhere behind that white bank of fog lay a black monster of the deep—maybe dead, maybe very much alive. If alive, would he charge the boat when he felt the tug of the rope? Who could tell? And if he charged, what then? A splintered boat, a scattered crew battling black, icy waves. They were lost, lost to all the world save one dark circle of water and the whale. Oh, it was creepy enough! Gladys Ardmore shuddered at thought of it and the goose flesh rose upon her arms.

And yet there was more to come. Behind that white wall of fog lay startling revelations.

Sudden as it had descended, so sudden the fog lifted and disclosed to their bulging eyes a second white wall, a wall that would not lift. It was a low, solid wall of ice.

"Man!" exclaimed Kennedy who, veteran that he was, seemed decidedly shaken. "Had the whale taken us a few yards more we must have been crashed to splinters!"

As the eyes of the little company roved the circle

of the sea they found themselves in an even more perilous position than at first it seemed. Not only were they facing a solid line of ice that in the cover of the fog had crept down upon them, but back of them, and to the right and left, were heavy banks of ice that, as if urged on by some hidden, malevolent force, were closing in, closer, ever closer upon them.

"It is coming," whispered Gladys.

"It's coming," echoed Curlie, rising in his place to stand and stare.

"It's here," said Kennedy grimly, as a great cake of ice gently bumped his boat.

"We—we'll pole our way out," Curlie stared about him.

"We'll stay right here for the present," declared Kennedy. "The fates have decreed it."

So, with the ice crowding in on every side, with the brown Eskimos still reeling in endless fathoms of line, they sat there in silence. And even as they sat motionless, at the topmost peak of a distant ice pile there appeared the figure of a man; a great, gaunt, white whiskered Moses of the Arctic.

"Look!" Curlie whispered to Gladys. "The

mysterious whaler. It's as if he were master of all the forces of the Arctic and had willed that we be trapped here."

At that instant a question passed swiftly across his mind, a question so strange he did not utter it: "Does this man drive a whale for a steed?"

The next moment the boy's thoughts were forcibly recalled to matters close at hand. With a suddenness that set them reeling, the boat gave a tremendous plunge forward. The whale was not dead. He had plunged. Before the astonished Eskimo could cut the line they struck, prow first, into the white wall of ice. The next instant, flooded with the stinging cold water of the Arctic sea, the boat began to sink.

CHAPTER II

LOST ON A FLOE

With characteristic lightning-like thought, Curlie Carson sized up the situation, then catching his companion by the arm hurried her by quick strides and jumps along the boat until with a final grand leap they cleared the wreckage, to land flat upon the surface of the great ice pan that lay directly before them.

There, a moment later, seated upon a heap of sails and rigging thrown upon the ice by the toiling Eskimos, they mutely surveyed the scene of disaster and calculated their chance of escape.

As Curlie Carson sat there his spirits dropped to their lowest ebb. The ice had come; the great, sweeping, all-embracing pack from the north, which for nine long months would not disappear. It had glided in from behind the fog. Could anything be worse?

They had hoped so much. Gladys Ardmore, Joe Marion and Curlie had dreamed of the whales they would catch, of the battles with black monsters, of wild encounters, of casks brimming with oil and the hold full of bone. They had dreamed all that, and now this, the season closed, one small whale captured, one on the line, somewhere out there in the ice, and now defeat, retreat.

"Retreat?" Curlie said the word out loud. His heart skipped a beat at the thought. Could they retreat? Or was it too late? Where was their ship, the staunch old *Sea Bear?* When would they be rescued—and how? Or would they be rescued at all? These ice floes drifted slowly toward the north, Curlie believed. Visions of eternal drifting, drifting, drifting until cold and hunger silenced their struggles forever, passed before Curlie's eyes.

"Defeat. Retreat." He whispered the words now. How he hated them! Retreat! And they had not wanted the things they had come after for themselves, these three had not, but had wanted them for others—seven others, seven gray haired men.

When he had gone in search of a crew for the

expedition, Gladys' father had found six of his old crew, the crew of forty years before. They had grown old but were eager to go on this final romantic voyage to northern seas. They had gone into it like boys, had these gray haired men; a captain, two mates, two seamen and a blacksmith. Of course there were other members of the crew, twenty-one others, but they did not count. They had been hired for the occasion. They were part of the machinery. Gladys, Curlie, Joe, they did not count either. Only these seven boyish gray haired men really counted. It was their voyage, their great adventure. For them the casks must flow full of oil; for them the hold must be choked with bone. Not that they needed or wanted the money this dark treasure would bring, but that this trip might bring back to them the wild, exultant joy of youth and the pride of a successful voyage.

"And now this," murmured Curlie.

"Yes. Just to think!" Gladys murmured back.

The voyage had been fruitless. Every hour of the month-long Arctic day a lookout had strained his eyes from the crow's nest. All to no purpose.

Here a white bear had broken the surface of the sea; there a herd of walrus tore black waters into white foam; but nowhere on the dark expanse did the twin fountains of leviathans spout white and lace-like in the slanting rays of the sun.

Hours without number they had wandered the trackless Arctic deep. Then in sheer desperation, when the season neared its end, they had braved the danger of ice floes and had followed the monster to his farthest northern lair.

"And now this," Curlie mumbled to himself again as with the others he strained upon the line that slowly lifted their battered motor boat upon the broad ice pan.

"Where's the whale?" Gladys asked suddenly.

"'T'ain't a bad sort of question," said a seaman. "Plenty of steaks on that boy's tail. It's likely we'll need some of 'em, too. He's off there somewhere in the floes, stone dead by now an floatin' free."

"Shall we go look for him?" Gladys spoke to Curlie but looked at Kennedy, the first mate. Kennedy did not shake his head, so away they went, carefully picking their way over the floes.

They had gone but a short distance and were mounting to the crest of a low ridge when Kennedy shouted to them:

"Keep on the tops of the ridges. They're safe. Don't lose sight of this. 'T'would be terrible to be lost in the floes." He pointed to a red handkerchief which fluttered from the top of an oar he had upended between two cakes of ice.

"All right," called Curlie, "we'll keep an eye out."

"And listen for a shout. We may call you back."

"We'll listen," said Gladys.

Then together they began picking their way across the floes. It was ghostly, this moving slowly forward over the cemetery-like whiteness of the great expanse of ice. The light, too, was strange. It was not day, neither was it night. It was the long twilight that preceeded an Arctic night. The sun had dropped from sight an hour before, but still a gray, misty twilight hung over all.

"Look! There he is!" Gladys exclaimed. Having climbed the upper edge of a great standing cake, they looked down into a deep, inky black valley of water.

"Dead!" Curlie whispered.

He took the girl's arm to lead her closer to the spot where in a pool of water the monster of the deep lay quite still.

The girl hesitated, then held back.

"Come on," said Curlie, "Why be afraid of a dead whale?"

Why indeed? Had the girl's guardian spirit whispered a warning in her ear? Certain it is that had they gone on they must surely have perished, for with a force and speed that was astonishing, the gigantic tail of the whale rose high above their heads to come down upon ice and water with such a crash as appeared to shake the very foundation of the sea.

At once all was confusion. The whale was not dead. The noise was deafening. Great splinters of ice that would have crushed a house flew high in the air. Water deluged everything. The very ocean appeared to change its shape. The giant cake on which the boy and girl stood suddenly changed ends, tilting to such a rakish angle that, despite all efforts, they were sent gliding, gliding down, down—to what?

They were soon enough to know. By great good

fortune they were not met at the bottom by a well of water. The mass of ice on which they dropped might easily seem worse than water. Composed as it was of old ice, ground round and smooth by the ceasless working of the waves, it was constantly worked up and down by the motion of the restless sea.

Scarcely did their feet touch one of these bits than it began to sink. A quick shift to a larger piece saved them for the moment. Then, beginning to revolve like a ball, this second cake threatened at any moment to send them spinning to an unknown death. Only by clinging to one another and stepping as the ice ball turned could they avert a catastrophe.

At the same time, as if to increase their discomfiture, there came again the prodigious noise made by the whale threshing in his pool.

"Oh! Curlie!" the girl cried, gripping his arm desparately. "We shall surely drown!"

"No," said Curlie, "we will not. See, over there is a broader bit of ice, a flat one. It does not turn. At its edge, too, is a landslide of small ice. We can climb up that and get away."

The girl looked and shuddered. It seemed their only chance, yet a desparate chance at that. Between them and that haven lay thirty feet of rolling, bobbing, heaving ice.

"Oh, Curlie, must we?" asked Gladys.

"I think," said Curlie soberly, "that if we are ever to see those seven gray haired men we have come to respect and love, if you are to talk once more with your father and be a comfort to him in his declining years, we must attempt it."

"All right, then." The girl's face was very sober as she put out a hand.

Then, hand in hand, here leaping a narrow black chasm where black waters bubbled, here losing a footing to regain it and stumble on, in ten breathless seconds they crossed the barrier and in safety reached more permanent footing.

Yet, even as they did so, an exclamation of despair escaped the girl's lips. The broad cake of ice was slowly rising. The gentle slope that was to have saved them was no more. Worse than this, the great cake of ice, six feet through and many yards in circumference, was rising more and more. It was even

now at a treacherous angle. Soon it would stand perpendicular. After that, if providence did not interfere, it would lean over the pool like a great white shadow, until with a sickening plunge it would dig them a grave and furnish a tombstone made up of hundreds of tons of ice.

As they stood there breathless, lips parted, hearts beating wildly, providence did interfere. A strange sort of providence it was—or could one call it providence?

To their utter astonishment, writhing and twisting like a snake, a strong line of walrus skin came gliding down the surface of that very cake of ice.

How did it come? Who had sent it? No time for questions now. Seizing the end, Curlie tested it.

"Fastened solid. Safe," he murmured. "Come on. Can you do it? Feet on the cake, hand over hand."

With tight set lips, Gladys nodded, Then up, up, up they went until with a sudden cry of relief the girl plunged after Curlie over the edge.

They did not waste a second in escaping from the place. No time to look for their deliverer. They

were away like the wind. Springing from cake to cake, at much risk of a dangerous fall, they put distance between themselves and that awe inspiring spot.

Nor were they a moment too soon. With a noise that was deafening the whole surface of the ice on which they had stood but a moment before rose straight in air to fall back on every side, revealing a ponderous black head rearing itself on high. Having gone to the bottom, the whale had "breached", as whale men would have said it. He had driven himself with all the force of his powerful fins and flukes straight up through the ice to the floe.

" Think what would have happened," whispered the girl. Then, " Curlie, who sent us that rope? "

Curlie shook his head.

" Guess."

" The great white man of the floes. The man with the black crew."

" That was my guess, too," she smiled. " But who knows? "

Again Curlie shook his head.

Eager to catch a glimpse of their deliverer, they looked back at the place from which they had come

but they saw no moving creature. Even the whale, lying across a broad ice pan, appeared at last to be quite dead.

Turning, Curlie looked at his companion. At once from his lips there escaped a low exclamation. Her face reflected a strange, unnatural light.

The cause was not far to seek. As with one impulse they whirled about, such a sight met their gaze as set their pulses throbbing.

"The boat!" The girl's tone was low and tense. "It's on fire!" At some little distance a red column of flames rose straight toward the sky.

"Or—or the ship," Curlie replied slowly. "It may be the ship."

For a moment, paralyzed by the dreadful possibilities of such a fire on the ice-locked polar sea, they stood there motionless, staring. Then, with a hurried stride and wildly beating hearts, they started toward the red column of fire.

CHAPTER III

A FIGHT FOR A GREAT PRIZE

Consternation inspired by the column of flames was short lived. As they came into view of the spot where Kennedy's handkerchief still waved in the breeze at the top of the oar, Curlie gave a low chuckle, the nearest he had come to laughing in several hours.

"It's a flare," he said. "Good old Kennedy! Leave it to him!"

What he said was true. In the whaleboat were several flares. Long, taper-like affairs to be used in case a boat got lost from its ship, these flares would burn for several minutes. Having mounted on a high ridge of ice, Kennedy, in the hope of attracting the attention of those on the ship, had lighted one.

Nor were his hopes unfounded. Hardly had Curlie and Gladys discovered the true nature of the flame when the sky some distance to the left of them was illuminated by a similar red glow.

"Got 'em," said Kennedy with a deep sigh of

relief. "We're safe enough now. Boat's about repaired. We'll be able to pole our way along after we've dragged the boat over the worst of it."

Strangely mixed were the sensations that came over Gladys and Curlie as they stood there watching that distant flare. Twice during the last hour they had faced death; once when the ice threatened to crush them, again when it seemed they might drift on the floes to starvation and death. Now life had been given back to them—fresh, abounding, joyous life. As they thought of this their hearts swelled.

There were moments of depression as well, for, after all, the thing they had set out to do, they and the seven gray haired men, remained undone; they had caught but one whale and the hold of the vessel was still empty.

Suddenly it was borne in upon them that, though they were interested in the desires of the veteran seamen, it was a personal affair with each of them. They had wanted to succeed on their own account. As for Curlie and Joe, it was their first adventure as whale men. Who does not wish to succeed on his maiden voyage?

With Gladys, too, the affair was personal. She

was to have a share in the proceeds of the trip. Everyone had shipped in the old whaling way. One man was to receive one one-hundredth of the entire catch as his pay. If the catch was one thousand barrels of oil, his share would be ten barrels. Others received a smaller share, two or three received more, but each, according to his ranking, was to have some definite share. As for Gladys, not being much of a whaler, she was to receive only one part in two hundred.

On their way to the whaling grounds, however, Gladys had discovered a wondeful use for her share of the catch. At Cape Prince of Wales, where they had taken on Eskimo recruits, she had found a small, poorly equipped hospital. Much was needed to make it a success—almost everything, in fact. With the promptness of a great-hearted girl, Gladys had pledged her share to this deserving charity, then had persuaded her father, whose share was to be much larger, to devote his to the same end. Others had promised a part of their earnings.

"And now there will be no share!" Quite unconsciously she said this out loud.

"Don't you be too sure of that, Miss," said the gray haired Kennedy, straightening up from a task he had just completed. "My opinion is, we'll take plenty of whales."

"But how can we? The ice—"

"Yes, Miss, there's ice now. But in the spring it's gone. Spring's the time to whale. Plenty then—"

"You—you don't mean—" the girl stared at him in speechless astonishment.

"Looks to me's if the ship was in the ice. And if she is, she stays there till spring. Safe enough, where she is. She'll drift over in the lea of the land and freeze in solid. Whale ships have been doin' that for fifty years. Not a chance in the world of getting out before spring, though."

Gladys sank down weakly upon the ice. Thoughts of spending nine months on a ship ice-locked in the Arctic sea overwhelmed her. The possibility of such a thing had never occurred to her, nor had it occurred to her father, she was sure of that.

Like a flash it all passed before her, the long night, the Northern Lights, glistening fields of ice, great white polar bears, the creaking of ice, the howl of

their dogs and the silence——the great white silence. The very thought of it all staggered her.

As her mind became quiet again she grasped at the words of Kennedy as a drowning man for a straw.

"He—he said we should catch whales in the spring. He said that, didn't he, Curlie?"

"That's what he said," Curlie replied a bit huskily.

"Do you think we will?"

"Haven't a doubt of it."

"Then—then—" A vision of that ragged little hospital at the Cape passed before her. "Then, Curlie, I guess we can stand it."

"I reckon we can, and then some," said Curlie stoutly. "Think of the adventures."

"Will there be adventures, Curlie?"

"Sure to be."

"Adventures," the girl whispered as she gazed dreamily away over the ice fields.

Curlie was more nearly right than he knew.

Two months passed. Once more Curlie walked upon the floes. Once more it was twilight, fast grow-

ing into night. This time he walked alone. He was hunting. In his hand he carried a single weapon, an Eskimo's walrus harpoon, a six foot shaft of wood with a loose point attached to a stout leather thong. Many a seal and walrus has received his death sting from such a weapon.

Curlie did not hope for a walrus. None had been seen. Seals were fairly abundant. The liver and heart of a seal are good. So is the dark, juicy steak. A seal would prove a prize.

True to Kennedy's prediction, they had found the ship so fast locked in the ice that nothing but spring could deliver her. For seven weeks they had drifted about, north, south, east and west. Then, one morning after a two days snow fog they had found themselves opposite some sort of land, perhaps an island, and close by, to their utter astonishment, they saw the black hull of another whaler.

"Wish I'd never seen her," Curlie grumbled bitterly now. "Better here alone."

That very day, as if nature had prepared a dock for them, the thermometer had fallen and they began freezing in within a mile of the other ship, and

not four miles from land off the north coast of Russia.

"And now we're here, frozen in solidly for the winter," Curlie told himself. "And the *Adler,* she's here too."

The *Adler* was the other whaler. He frowned deeply as he spoke the name.

Night had now come, a cloudless, moonlit, starry night that, save for the long deep shadows that were everywhere, was light as day.

They hunted at night quite as much as by day. Was this because it was an Eskimo custom? Did they have greater success at night? Were they preparing themselves for the time, not so far away now, when there would be no day? However it might be, here was Curlie, searching out some likely sealing hole, and with his eyes open for other things.

It was spooky business, this wandering about in the eerie moonlight. Curlie had never become quite used to it. Strange as it may seem, there were many mysteries in this desolate waste of ice and snow. He had never quite forgotten, probably never would forget, that gaunt old Moses of the floes with his black

crew riding the ocean behind a whale. He had not forgotten the line that had come to them in the nick of time over the tottering ice pan.

There was some mystery about the island, which they had never visited. A channel, not yet frozen over, separated them from it. It had not been visited by men from the *Adler*. It was supposed to be a barren, uninhabited waste of rock and sand. But, for all this, on several occasions watchers from the deck of the *Sea Bear* had seen lights moving there.

"It's all very mysterious," Curlie told himself.

On this night, however, Curlie had a strange feeling. He was some distance from his ship. No one had come with him. He had not heard a sound though now and then he broke short off in his wondering to listen. He had a feeling that some one was near.

"It's that Kennedy affair," he told himself. "Got on my nerve, I guess."

The Kennedy affair had gotten on all their nerves. Everyone loved the gray haired Kennedy.

"He has only one enemy in the world," Mr. Ardmore had once said to Curlie, "and that's whiskey.

The smell of it drives him mad. For once he's going on a whaling trip with his enemy left safely behind."

Unfortunately, this prophesy had proven untrue. Only three nights before, by the rarest chance, Curlie had stumbled upon Kennedy lying prone upon the ice a half mile from his ship. Had it not been for this fortunate discovery he must surely have perished, for the night was white with the still, bitter cold.

Kennedy had been to visit the other whaler and this had been the result. Some one of the crew had filled him with hard drink and had started him home alone. Overcome by the intoxicants, he had fallen into a stupor from which he might never have wakened.

"Whatever men may think of whiskey in other places," Captain Townsend of the *Sea Bear* had said next day, shaking his finger at Captain Deveral of the *Adler,* "it has no place in the Arctic, and whatever you may do for your own men, I warn you and your crew never to give another drop to one of my men."

"And I tell you," answered the other, bursting into a towering rage, "I tell you, you look to your ship, and I'll look to mine! Git back to your lady manned,

play whale ship, and stay there. You've no business in these waters. They're mine, and have been all these years."

And thus the matter ended—or shall we say began? Captain Townsend believed, and Mr. Ardmore agreed, that this Captain Deveral, a rough man of the old school, was planning by the use of liquor, and perhaps other means, foul as might be, to so cripple their crew that when spring came, instead of lingering for a rich harvest they would steam away home, leaving the *Adler* in undisputed possession of the sea which, in truth, belongs to any man who dares to come and stay.

"And to think," Curlie grumbled to himself, "we're tied like Kilkenny cats to such a man as that for seven more long months."

As soon as Kennedy had been brought in, Captain Townsend, a short, broad-shouldered man with small twinkling gray eyes where darts of fire lurked, had called his men together in the forward cabin and had given them such a lecture as Curlie had never before heard. He had appealed to them in the name of loyalty to the ship, her captain, their homes, their friends,

their families. He had warned them of Arctic perils and had begged them to take a strong hold on themselves that they might be able to face the cold, the darkness, the terrible lonesome isolation of the long night, and not fall a prey to the burning liquor which would doubtless be offered them by members of the other ship's crew.

"That's where you have it right!" a hardy sailor had exclaimed at this juncture. "It's the ship's crew and not the captain that's got the liquor. Don't think for a minute that a captain as fierce and frugal, as eager for whales and great gain, would furnish his men with whiskey in such a land of desolation. Not for a second would he do that. They're makin' of it themselves. Out of sour dough they're makin' of it. Somewheres out among the ice piles there's a still. Depend upon it. The captain, he was too mad to deny tellin' you his men have it, but mind you, he didn't. There's a still, sir."

On hearing these words, Curlie had resolved that should he chance to come upon the moonshine still with its mass of coils, that like a twining serpent spat out fire and death in a land of ice and darkness, he

most surely would sink it to the bottom of the sea or be sunk himself.

Then as he marched on, head down and deep in thought, he became suddenly conscious of some dark bulk just before him. At the same time a looming figure sprang at him, the figure of a giant of a seaman, and in his hand, uplifted for a throw, was the long pointed shaft of a whaling harpoon.

"The still!" the boy whispered. "The still and its guard." Instinctively he dodged backward and to one side. He was not a second too soon. The barbarous weapon grazed his shoulder, then went crashing to the ice.

Stunned by the suddenness of the onslaught, he stood for ten seconds where he was. In that ten seconds his assailant regained his weapon.

"It's to be a fight," Curlie told himself as of a sudden every cell of his brain, every fiber of his body leaped into action. "A fight for a great prize!' Gripping his own slender weapon he sprang at his opponent for all the world as if he had the nation's army at his back.

CHAPTER IV

A SURPRISE ATTACK

As Curlie entered the conflict with the brawny seaman he realized at once that it was to be a David and Goliath battle. He was to be David. The other, a powerful brute of a man, was in possession of a weapon which, used either as a spear or a club, could execute a man with a single thrust or swing. Curlie held only a light shaft with a loose point attached to thirty feet of rawhide string. A straight thrust or throw was his only method of defense, a slight one at that; yet there was a chance. He must do his best.

Motive has much to do with the outcome of a conflict. Here almost everything was on Curlie's side. The man he opposed fought only for ill-gotten gain, and for the mad sensations that moonshine brings. Curlie fought for a principle, a cause, for friends and a great hope. He fought to rid these Arctic floes

of a curse, to save his fellow seamen from temptation which might lead to death, to preserve them for the battle with whales in the spring, which in the end meant happiness to seven gray haired men, to his girl pal, Gladys, and to many who in times of sickness or disaster might be brought to the little hospital by the sea.

So the battle began. With a roar of rage, clubbing his weapon, the seaman dashed straight at Curlie.

"Not a chance," thought Curlie as, with a quick turn he darted away. He had not played football on his high school team for nothing. In a twinkle he was around an ice pile and out of sight.

Then came the great temptation. He was free and could escape. Should he? That would seem the prudent thing; go racing back to the ship, tell what had happened and bring back his crew to break up the still.

But would the still be here when he returned? Most assuredly not. It would be gone. Its fatal work would go on. No, this was his chance. He would get that still. At the risk of his life he would.

With this in mind, he dashed around the next

ice pile. The still, a dark bulk of coils and small sheet iron casks, was in clear view. Beyond it was a patch of open water.

"The very place!" he breathed. "Over she goes."

Hardly had he uttered these words when the purple face of his enemy appeared at the other side of the ice pile. Again the harpoon flew. Again it missed by a hair. Again the seaman dashed after it.

This time, however, Curlie too was in the race. The prize, the deadly harpoon, would have been his but for a broken fragment of ice which tripped him and sent him flat.

Stunned by the fall, for the count of ten he lay still; then realizing that his life depended upon it, he sprang to his feet.

Once more, with his weapon swinging above his head, the seaman, who by this time was fairly frothing at the mouth, was almost upon him.

There was no time to turn and flee. In sheer desperation Curlie drew back his harpoon hand and let fly. By great good chance he retained hold of the loose end of the rawhide string attached to the point.

The harpoon, thus hastily thrown, struck the man's

heavy sealskin boot at the point where it protected the calf of his leg. Piercing this through and through, the loose point came out on the other side.

As the man leaped back to avoid the blow, the string was drawn tight and he was tripped and fell with a heavy thud, his head striking a cake of ice.

That was Curlie's opportunity. For a full minute the man, stunned by the blow on his head, lay there unconscious. When at last he came to himself to sit up dizzily it was to find his hands and feet bound and to see Curlie wielding the heavy harpoon, engaged in the business of reducing that whaler's moonshine still into a battered mass of copper and galvanized metal.

Though the man roared until he was black in the face, the work did not stop. When it was completed, hastily dragging the mass to the dark pool, Curlie dumped it in. Then with a few quick steps he reached the seaman and cut the bonds that held his feet. But he left his hands tied, muttering, "That's better than you did for poor old Kennedy." Then slinging the whale harpoon over his shoulder, he disappeared.

"That whale harpoon," he said to Gladys an hour later, after relating his story, "shall be my lucky harpoon. I will take it on all my hunts in the spring. It is a weapon I won in fair and open conflict."

Truth so say, the history of that harpoon could not at that time have been written, the greater part of it lying still in the future.

"Curlie," said Gladys, pointing away through the darkness toward the white bulk of the island that, looming out of the sea, seemed the ghost of some long lost continent, "Curlie, there's that light again."

It was true. Low down, at the base of what must be a snow covered slope, a feeble, wavering light was moving.

"Curlie," said the girl, "who do you think could be over there?"

"I haven't the faintest notion. It might be some poor fellows stranded there from a small sailing boat or a gasoline schooner, might it not?"

"Might."

"Or—or a crew of Eskimos from a skin boat?"

"Might."

"Seeing the ghost light again?"

ing for a likely sea hole, he came suddenly upon the great black carcass of their whale.

"Good!" he exclaimed. "Here is plenty of food."

But what was this? As he walked about the frozen mass he came first upon footprints in the snow, then sled tracks. Then his startled eyes discovered that a great hole had been cut in the side of the whale and its contents sledded away.

"The men of the *Adler*!" he exclaimed. "They're robbing us! They're haulding away our blubber."

The thing struck him all of a heap. They had counted on the oil and blubber of that whale. This much they had felt assured of. But now they were powerless to defend it.

"Anyway," he told himself, starting to his feet, "they shall not have it without a struggle!"

"Say, you!" he shouted a half hour later as a sled, drawn by six smart dogs, came gliding toward him. "Say you! That's our whale."

"How come?" said one of the three seamen who rode sidewise on the sled.

"We killed him. That's our harpoon in his side."

clenching his fists. "And they are revelling back there in the ship like ancient kings!"

He went away, sad and drooping, but filled with the realization that something must be done and that he alone was free to do it.

Wild thoughts came to him. He would make his way back to Alaska over ice floes, open water, tundra and mountains. From there he would bring aid. This thought was at once dismissed as utter madness. The distance was hundreds of miles, the way utterly impassable.

He thought of the other whale ship. She had not been molested. He would go to her skipper and in the name of a fellow countryman, beg him to come to their aid.

"Fine chance!" he muttered after a few moments of thought. "Fine chance after the quarrels we've had. Wouldn't doubt but that they are at the bottom of it all. Want to drive us out of the whaling fields. But they shan't. They shall not! Somehow," he clenched his fists until his nails cut the flesh, "somehow we'll win yet."

Two days later, as he wandered the ice floes look-

"Probably brought some of their own vile stuff with them," he muttered. "If only—"

For a moment his mind was all a-whirl with mad dreams. He saw a picture that had hung on the walls of the bedroom of his childhood—a picture of Washington crossing the Delaware.

"If only I could surprise and capture them," he told himself with something like a mad ecstacy surging through his being.

But as his blood cooled he realized that armed as he was with only a walrus harpoon, which he had snatched up beside the ship, the thing could not be done.

Curiosity led him toward the island. From a distant promentory he saw a sight that wrung from his soul the very dregs of sadness. Through a door, which now and then opened to admit a Russian guard, and from which the breath laden air poured forth like hoarfrost, he caught sight of his comrades. Crowded into a room scarcely large enough for six men, they would not be able to so much as lie down upon the hard floor.

"The—the beasts!" he hissed, clenching and un-

first missed him he was some distance from the ship, and in such a labyrinth of ice piles that the whole Russian army could not have hunted him out.

"But now," he was whispering to himself, "now what to do? That's the question."

That night, just as the dark shadows of night had come, after hours of fruitless wandering, he found himself approaching the ship. In spite of himself he could not help feeling like a boy who had run away from home when, on approaching the ship which had so long been his happy home, he found it alight. He could not help feeling that the visit of the Russians, and the convict-like march of his comrades, was only a dream.

This illusion was soon dispelled by the sounds of revelling from within. There were choice foods aboard ship. Refrigerated chicken, geese and turkeys, rare cheeses, rich plumb pudding. The choicest of these were to have been served on Christmas day.

"Christmas," he whispered mournfully to himself. "There'll be no Christmas for us!"

From the wild tumult of the revelling, he knew that the men were drinking. They had not found the liquor on board ship.

than soldiers, that they belonged to an order of things that knew no just law, that took what it wished and killed whom it would, and he realized how futile an unarmed attempt at resistance would be. So, with bowed head, he said:

"As soon as we can gather the clothing and blankets we need, we will go."

A half hour later, close by her father's side, with a great sob buried deep in her heart, Gladys marched away with the company toward the desolate blizzard swept shore. As she marched along she looked sharply about her, to the right, left, before and behind.

"He's not here," she whispered to herself. "He—he's gone."

She was speaking of Curlie Carson. True to his purpose, he had vanished.

The Russians had watched them closely, but not closely enough. The port holes of the *Sea Bear* were large. Curlie was exceedingly slim.

Having gone to his state room for clothing and blankets, he had tossed three blankets and a heavy sheepskin coat through the port hole and had come wriggling and twisting after. At the time Gladys

wilderness. We shall all perish!" Then of a sudden a wild resolve seized him.

"Gladys," he whispered, bending over close to the girl, "when you all go, I don't go. See?"

"Wha—"

"I don't know what I can do, but I'll do something. We'll never go to Anadir. It's death. Anyway, it is for you and for those seven old men. They'd never make it. That's all there's time to say now." He pressed her hand, then leaned back in his place.

As for Captain Townsend, his face was a study. Like the father of Evangeline, he represented the interest of his people. Here, before him, was a band of armed men who proposed to dispossess him of his ship. As he stood there, his face grew red with anger. He saw his ship, his own special charge, lost to him; saw the hopes of his fellow seamen of other days blighted; saw the little hospital, to which Gladys and her father had promised much, doing without the things they sorely needed. He would gladly have died rather than surrender.

But slowly, as calmer reason came to him, he realized that this band of men were more like renegades

"For all the world as if they expected to come here to live," Curlie thought with a sinking heart.

That this was exactly what they expected, it soon became apparent. Hardly had the skipper concluded the service when the commandant, as if eager to be through with a disagreeable affair, began stating his business on board ship. He was, he said, in command of this detachment of the grand army of Russia. There had been rumors, he said, that certain rash young adventurers had set up a foreign flag on their north coast island and were attempting to claim it for their country. Having been sent up from Anadir, he had surprised and captured them. Somewhat to his surprise, he had seen the *Sea Bear* come within the three mile limit of their shores and anchor there. Since this was the case, and since he must assume that this ship was a supporting party to those daring young interlopers on shore, he considered it his duty to arrest them all and to remove them from the ship to their compound on the island. In time they should all be taken to Anadir for a hearing.

"Anadir!" thought Curlie in consternation. "That's more than a thousand miles over a trackless

CHAPTER V

THE WHITE SHADOW

The next move of the old skipper after the Russian and his rifles appeared at the door interested Curlie immensely. After stooping over to regain his book, then stepping back to his place, he said:

"This being the Sabbath, we are holding Divine service. Will you gentlemen join us?"

Curlie wondered if any of those men understood English. Evidently the commandant did, for turning, he spoke a few words in Russian.

At once, stepping aside, he admitted twenty-six men who, with their heavy furs, red faces and gleaming rifles, seemed very large and fierce.

"Like a pack of hungry wolves," Curlie thought to himself.

After silently grounding their rifles, the Russians stood at attention, but all the time, as the skipper read the service, their eyes were roving about the very comfortable cabin.

service at ten. The skipper, being a devout man, always read a service on Sunday at that hour.

At night a watch was kept on the deck, mostly as a lookout for fire. During the day this was not thought necessary. All hands were now in the large cabin below. In a loud, sonorous tone the skipper was reading:

"All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me," when of a sudden there sounded a heavy thud on the deck above. This was followed by another and yet another. Then, to the startled ears of the listeners, there came the tramp, tramp as of a small army.

"Soldiers," whispered Gladys, her face white.

Just as the skipper, dropping his book with a bang, started for the hatchway, the cabin door burst open and the red face of an exceedingly large man appeared in the opening. On his head he wore a towering black cap. He was framed all around by gleaming rifle barrels.

"Soldiers!" Curlie whispered. "Russian Bolshevik soldiers!"

"There," he heaved a sigh, "we have a line on him."

"What good will that do? The ice won't move. nor the whale either, not for six or seven months."

"Quite right, but a line's a line, if its only a horse hair. The law says a caught whale is a taken whale, and a free whale belongs to the man who'll take him."

Joe scratched his head and said nothing further.

That night, standing on the snow covered deck, gazing away first at the vast expanse of ice conquered sea, then at the great dipper that nightly circled the north star, Curlie found his mind filled with wonder at the ways of providence. A hundred miles or more away they had harpooned a whale. Then they had found their ship drifting in the ice. They had given up the whale for lost; yet here he was.

"What currents, what gales, what shifting mountains and valleys of ice directed by this benign providence aided in carrying that prize to its final resting place? Who can tell?" So he thought within himself, and a great content stole over him.

Strange to say, not twenty-four hours had passed before his content was rudely shaken from him.

The next day being Sunday, they were at Divine

"Anyway," he added, "whether it's that very one or not, it's a great find. Think of the blubber and bone in him!"

"It's our whale!" he exclaimed as a moment later they came up to the black mass lying half above the ice. "There's our harpoon."

Sure enough, as they examined the rust reddened shaft that still protruded from the whale's side, they found the letters stamped in it to be S.B. (Sea Bear).

"We'll tell the captain about it," said Curlie. "It will add a hundred casks or so of oil to our rather scant supply, and a few hundred pounds of bone as well. First, though, we must perform a little ceremony which is always done when you find a whale."

He drew from his pocket a slender fish line with which he had been trying for tom-cod and smelt.

The line was wound round two bits of walrus ivory, each about six inches long. To Joe's utter astonishment, after unrolling the line his companion walked to the flukes or hind flippers of the whale, then after burying one piece of ivory half its length in the frozen flesh, he drew the line out a distance of three yards where he attached it to the other bit of ivory wedged into a crack between two splinters of ice.

think of it as something in the way of fulfilled prophesy.

It was late the next afternoon when Curlie Carson and Joe Marion, walking together on the ice floes, made an interesting and important discovery. Joe had taken no very active part in matters outside the ship. He had been busy working out some light radio equipment which he thought might be used by boat crews for keeping in touch with their ship. Now, however, after a hard day's work inside, he was enjoying to the full a walk in the brisk air of a world that was all new and strange to him.

Suddenly, as they rounded a great up-ended cake of ice, they found themselves confronted by a towering bulk so black that it stood out like a bit of black coal in a tray of diamonds.

"Black ice!" exclaimed Joe.

"Whale," said Curlie. "Dead whale, frozen in the ice. Our whale, I'll vouch for it."

"How can you tell?"

"Well," grinned Curlie, "when one of these fellows comes as near being the end of you as our whale did, you sort of get to know him."

wintering in these waters, but I remember reading of some explorer—at least that's what they called him —who had put off three or four white men and an Eskimo or two, from a gasoline schooner, onto that island. They had supplies for a year, the article said."

"What were they going to do?" asked the captain, a note of incredulity in his voice.

"That's the strange part of it. They were going to set up a flag and claim the island for their country, Great Britain or the United States, I've forgotten which. Said they might get into trouble with the Russians."

"Think they might," grumbled the captain. "What'd they want it for?"

"Some sort of base, it said."

"New base for the North Pole, I suppose," laughed the captain. "But say, those chaps may get us whalers into a heap of trouble!"

"How?"

Curlie's question was not answered. Someone called the captain away at that moment. For all that, Curlie was to remember that remark later and to

They started. It was the captain who had spoken.

"Sure. There it is. See for yourself," said Curlie, pointing away.

"Can't be any mistake about it this time," said the captain, rubbing his eyes to look again. "Mighty strange, I'd say. No Eskimos living there, I'm sure. I wintered back here more than twenty years ago. Went ashore then. Rotten, desolate place. Not a willow bush, not a shrub of any kind. Good hunting grounds for walrus and polar bear. But no Eskimos would live there. Practically cut off from the mainland; hard pull winter or summer. No, its not Eskimos. A sociable chap, the Eskimo. Likes to visit, he does. Lot of chance to visit there! Hobnob with bears and seals. Sporty time, that. Curlie, what's your notion? Who's over there? Ice will finish freezing in two or three days. We can cross then. Who'll we find there?"

"White men," Curlie hazarded.

"Some mad recluse?"

"That's not my notion. Do you know, Captain," Curlie said slowly, "seems incredible enough from what we know and from what you've told us of

"Might be true. But you lost him, didn't you? Do you think you could claim every wild duck that caught a shot from your gun but didn't fall?"

"Perhaps not. But we got a line on him."

"Show me."

Curlie led them to the whale's flukes, where from beneath the recently fallen snow he dug two bits of ivory he had driven there and the fish line that joined them.

"Ha! Ha! Ha!" laughed the seaman. "He calls that a line!"

"It is a line," declared Curlie, growing angry. "It's as much a legal line as an inch thick steel cable." He spoke now as if he had his whole ship's company at his back. "You'll find it's legal, too, when you get back to San Francisco. I've got a witness who saw me attach that line. So you just go ahead and boil down that blubber. Stow the bone in your hold. When we get back to the States we'll draw on your skipper for the whole of it, and he'll pay. Oh, he'll pay all right! The courts will see to that."

Having completed this speech, and beginning to fear from the black looks of the men that they might

do him violence, he walked with sufficient dignity and yet a little haste out of their sight.

Without thinking much about it, he went too far. When at last he came to himself, he had lost himself from the whale and a substantial, though tough, dinner.

Ten days later found the condition of the prisoners little improved; in fact, it might be said that things had grown worse. True, the men had been permitted to bring a quantity of lumber from the ship and to build themselves a rude additional shelter. They had brought coal, and kept up a little fire. But the food brought them in scanty quantities was the coarsest the ship offered—canned beef, salt pork, dried beans and hard tack. To this was added some indescribable stuff the Russians had carried.

All this, together with the foul air they were compelled to breath, was rapidly lowering their morale. In fact, a few were ill with scurvy.

As for Gladys, she stuck beside her father and, white faced but cheerful, kept whispering to him:

"Have courage. Curlie is free. He's resourceful. He thinks of things. He'll save us yet."

One evening just at dusk, when affairs seemed at the very worst, a strange man appeared among the Russians. All the *Sea Bear* men recognized him at once as one from the *Adler*. Only one of them knew him for the man he really was—the man who had gotten old Kennedy drunk and had left him to freeze, and who, defending his illicit still, had tried to kill Curlie. The man who knew him was Kennedy. At once, upon seeing him, without a word Kennedy dashed straight at him.

The man looked first at a Russian guard, then seeing he was too close to Kennedy and too far from the guard, he dashed down the bank to lose himself in the ice fields that covered the silent sea. The next second Kennedy, in hot pursuit, disappeared also.

It was about that same hour that Curlie Carson, moving forward in what seemed his last stagger, might have been seen wandering in the moonlight among the floes. His body was bent as if he carried a load, his feet shuffled, his eyes closed as if in sleep; yet still he staggered on, and after him, always a few yards behind, there followed a white shadow.

He had thought of nothing; had accomplished nothing. For once his keen mind could think of no way out. He had slept little, had eaten less. For hours he had sat watching at a seal hole, only to lose the seal in the end. Once, in desperation, he had harpooned a young walrus. In this adventure, the walrus being far too strong for him, he had come near losing his life. He had lost the rawhide rope and point to his harpoon. The shaft was little more than a walking stick. With this he had killed two small Arctic birds. These, after allowing them to freeze, he had eaten raw.

He was lost now, lost among the never ending floes; lost and well nigh hopeless. But still clinging to life, he stumbled on and ever, a few paces behind him glided the white shadow.

An hour after he had disappeared into the floes, the aged mate, Kennedy, returned to his comrades. Silent, seemingly exhausted, he sank down before the fire. There he fell into a doze from which he now and again half awoke to start up, then sink back again. But all this time his thin grim lips were closed. What

had happened out there in the moonlight among the floes? So the night wore on, and in time they all slept, slept miserably, cold, hungry and in despair, but slept all the same.

Curlie Carson, half dead though he was, gnawed by hunger, beaten by wind, benumbed by the terrible cold of the Arctic, all but walking in his sleep, was nevertheless thinking. And as often happens in such a case, his broken thoughts had to do with something that to all appearances was far from having anything to do with his present sad state.

He was thinking of the great, gaunt Moses-like man and his six black seamen.

"They were no phantoms, either," he told himself. "Real men, that's what they were, a real boat with a real white man and six black men in it. Kanakas, the blacks probably were. Wonder where they came from, and what they were doing up here in the Arctic? Wonder where they are now.

"By all that's good!" He stumbled and all but fell as a new thought came to him. "If I could find them they'd help me. That is, they would have. Too

late now, I guess. It's—I'm—" This time he stumbled and went down upon his knees.

As he fell the white shadow that had been following a few yards behind him stopped, and from it there sounded forth a hissing sound.

Curlie's temptation was to lie down and sleep. "It couldn't hurt," something inside seemed to say. The world about him seemed to grow suddenly warmer. A little sleep—a—

But his sturdier self dragged him to his feet and urged him on. There might yet be a chance. What chance? Who could tell? Any chance.

All unnoticed by him, a black shadow lurking behind an ice pile suddenly slipped out to follow on his trail. This black shadow came between him and the white shadow. The white shadow dropped back a few paces, but still followed on. So they passed on among the ghost haunted, cemetery-like fields of ice—the boy and the silently gliding shadows, one black and one white.

CHAPTER VI

AN EMPTY SHIP

As Curlie Carson moved painfully forward, now tripping and all but falling, now skirting by a narrow margin a deep, dark pool that might have been his death, and now shaking himself into wakefulness, he realized that the time must soon come when, from sheer exhaustion he must fall to rise no more.

"If only I could find the ship or the island, I might give up to them."

Give up? He still hated the thought. But it was now too late for even that.

So, all unconscious of the shadows that followed after, one black, one white, he still stumbled on until at last, tripping over a little mound of ice, he fell and did not rise.

The black shadow paused. The white shadow hissed again, then came to a standstill. So for a full moment, framed by eternal white, the three remained where they were, motionless.

Then of a sudden the black shadow moved forward; the white shadow too, but very slowly, as if with extreme caution.

Bending over, grasping the boy, the black shadow lifted him, then hurried away. Too weak to resist, perhaps already lost in that dull stupor which in the Arctic passes for sleep, the boy offered no resistance.

When Curlie awoke several hours later his eyes beheld strange things. He was sleeping between deer skins in some sort of den. Not unlike a white bear's den, the walls being of snow. He might have been in a polar bear's den, too, had matters turned out differently, and had not the black shadow appeared at the opportune moment, for the white shadow which had followed him so long and so patiently had been a great, gaunt polar bear who had come down from the far north in search of food.

"This, however, is no bear's den," the boy told himself dreamily. "The roof is of skins. Bears do not make their roofs of skins."

As he shifted his gaze until it rested on a corner where the yellow glow of a large seal oil lamp gave the snow walls an orange hue, he was startled at the

sight that met his eyes. Seated before the lamp, legs crossed, shoulders drooping, white beard touching his knees, was a giant white man; the very giant he had seen riding with his crew behind a whale.

This mood lasted but for a moment. It was shattered by the appearance of a beaming black face and a black hand that held a bowl of delicious smelling broth.

"Seal broth," said the black man. "Drink it. Drink all of it. It'll do you good."

Curlie did drink all of it, and craved more. But, understanding that in his weakened condition this was all that was good for him, he sank back upon his deerskin bed.

His mind was becoming normal. He was seeing things more clearly now. He had been found, in the nick of time, too, by some one and brought here to the den of that mystery man of the floes.

"Who—who brought me here?" he asked.

"Me, Mister. I done it. Been out huntin' seals. Came in sight of you. What you suppose?" the man showed the whites of his eyes. "Big white bear a follerin' after, biggest bear ever I seed. Reckoned

on makin' a meal out'n you. Can't never do that now. Got that white bear skin a stretchin' outside this here cabin."

Curlie's head swam. How close he had come to death! What a debt of gratitude he owed to this black man!

But, of a sudden, his face sobered. His friends? What of them?

"Soon as I grow strong," he told himself, "I must do something. Perhaps these people will help. I am sure they will."

After that he closed his eyes and slept.

Five days Curlie lived in that strange cabin. Or shall we say five nights? The nights were long now, the days short. Soon would come the long, long Arctic night.

During those long nights he wondered much. How far had he wandered from the ship, the island and his companions? How were they faring? Wearying of half starvation and cold, had they rebelled and had there been a bloody battle? He hoped not. There must be some other way. But in the long tramp to Anadir there could be no hope. He

thought most of Gladys. After all, she was but a girl in her late teens and quite unused to such hardships. Would they never get back to the ship? Would the spring bring them freedom and a hold full of oil and bone, or defeat and death?

The food the black men served was good, but strange. Meat, the most curious variety of meat and fish without end. There was a strange sort of hard bread very like Swedish rye bread, only better.

All this was very satisfactory, but Curlie was eager to regain his strength and be away, in some way to serve his people.

Most interesting of all his strange companions here was the mysterious white man. He learned something about him on the very first day. Gladys was right. She had said he was either blind or deaf. He was deaf. More than that, he was dumb. He spoke to his strange crew only with his fingers.

"Think of being deaf and dumb in such a land!" Curlie whispered to himself. "What a marvelous man!" He was destined to think of this man as more marvelous still before he was done with him.

That night he talked long and earnestly to the

black man who had saved his life. He was strong now, he assured him. He wanted to go to the aid of his people. He talked of the purposes that had brought them to the Arctic, of the desires of the seven eager, gray haired men, of the mission hospital for Eskimos at the Cape. Of these things and many others he talked, and all the time in an eager sort of way he was trying to enlist these new friends to his cause.

It was strange. As he talked he seemed never to tell this black man anything that he did not already know. It was like reading the twenty-third Psalm to an aged preacher. In the end, too, the response was entirely unsatisfactory. The black man merely grinned from ear to ear.

"For all the world as if the whole thing was a huge joke," Curlie thought to himself in extreme exasperation.

The black man promised him nothing. He did not so much as assure him that he would guide him back to the island and the ship.

In the end the boy spent a miserable night. He was left alone with one black man and his dreads

and fears. Strange as it may seem, the unfolding events of the following night were glorious.

The short day had not yet come to its close when the black man told Curlie to put on his coat and follow him.

As they walked, in as near a straight line as the roughness of the ice would permit, darkness stole in upon them. Shadows loomed here, there, everywhere, but no others were so great as the one they in time came to—the shadow of the *Sea Bear.*

"Good old *Sea Bear!*" Curlie thought to himself.

To his consternation he saw that the black man was to all appearances planning to walk straight up to her.

"Hist!" Curlie whispered, pulling him by the arm. "The Russians!"

"'S'all right. Come on," mumbled the man, not taking so much care as to whisper.

Curlie stood aghast. He moved on slowly but with eyes and ears alert for sign or sound of attack, pursuit or challenge.

Though a light gleamed here and there in the cabins, there came from the ship no sound.

"Strange!" he thought.

Walking straight to the gangplank, which had weeks before been lowered to the ice, the black man brought his foot down noisily upon it.

Again Curlie gripped his arm as he hissed: "The Russians!"

"Come on. It's all right, I tell you." The man led the way. Curlie, in a daze, every nerve alert, followed.

There came no sound. To his utter stupefaction, though his guide took him from cabin to cabin, he saw no sign of the Russians either, save for the general disorder one might expect. In one corner of the forward cabin was a stack of twenty-six rifles, and near these on the floor a quantity of ammunition.

"It—why, it's spooky," Curlie said out loud. "It's like a derelict ship adrift at sea. Where have they gone?"

The black man shrugged, but did not answer.

Then of a sudden wild thoughts whirled through the boy's mind.

"My—my friends," he stammered. "Where are they?"

"They come very soon. Listen!" He held up a hand for silence.

There came the muffled tramp of many feet on the snow.

"They come now," the black man waved an arm toward the field of glistening white.

In an instant Curlie was down the gangplank and away. The first persons he met were Gladys and her father.

"Curlie!" Gladys cried joyously.

"Gladys and Mr. Ardmore!" Curlie exclaimed in turn.

"Oh, Curlie! I told them you'd do it. But tell me, how did you accomplish it?" Gladys asked.

"I?" said Curlie in surprise. "I accomplish what?"

"Why, our freedom, the saving of the ship, to be sure!"

"That was none of my doing. I'm quite as much in the dark as you. But come aboard. She is indeed free. There is not a soul on board, save one friend. There are rifles there, too. Who knows how soon we may need them?"

So, closely followed by all the ship's company, they climbed the gangplank together, but the black man was nowhere to be found.

Late that evening Curlie and Joe Marion stood on the snow covered deck of the *Sea Bear*. For a time they were silent as they looked away at the ice floes that, like their future, lay away and away, dim, distant, mysterious.

After that their young hearts overflowed with wonderings at the thing which had befallen them. The Russians were gone. What had happened? Would they come back?

"Well, if they do," said Joe, "they'll find themselves facing their own rifles. They're a queer make, but our men have already learned to work them. What's more, the Captain will keep a watch night and day after this."

"But Curlie, tell us about yourself," said Gladys.

Curlie told, and as he told their wonder grew.

"Where's this gray haired master of the floes and his black men now? It must have been one of them who told us we were free to go back to the ship."

"Undoubtedly was," said Curlie. "I haven't the

least notion where they are and I'm sure I couldn't find my way to their camp."

"Curlie," Gladys gripped his arm, "you don't suppose he is a sort of ghostly guardian, do you?"

"Hardly," Curlie laughed.

"Do you suppose our dreams will yet come true?" asked Gladys. "Will spring break the ice barriers from our ship and set us free? Will we at last go back to that little hospital bearing news of rich treasure? Will our seven gray haired veterans return home with glowing faces?"

"Here's hoping!" said Curlie as they turned to go below. There was a cheerful note in his voice, but in his heart there was misgiving. What had happened to the Russians? Would there be a reprisal? Would armed men by the hundreds come swarming in upon them? Long months of winter were yet before them. Much might happen in those months. Would it be good or bad?

"Whaling in the Arctic," Curlie mused. "I've read several books about whaling in Southern Seas, but none about whaling in the Arctic. I think I am beginning to see the reason why."

CHAPTER VII

THE LONG ARCTIC NIGHT

How shall we describe the feelings of one who, having from childhood been accustomed to the noise and bustle, the gleam and glamor of a great city, finds himself encompassed by the great white silence of the long Arctic night? Who could describe this perfect silence. Sounds are accidental, momentary, transient. Silence is everlasing, eternal.

Silence rules the Arctic night. The stars dare not whisper. The rushing north wind, tearing on from ice pile to ice pile, makes no sound. Even when with his on-rushing power this same north wind piles the sea ice in massive heaps, tons on tons, he does it so silently that a passerby, stepping by chance upon one of these masses, fails to realize that it moves until he finds himself being lifted high and tossed about.

It was in such a field of silence as this that the

crew of the *Sea Bear* took their places once more aboard the ship.

To Curlie, the whole affair—this walking the deck, eating the accustomed food, sleeping in a berth, talking with his friends—was for many days a sort of dream. To have given up hope of life itself, to be plucked from the jaws of a starving polar bear, to be led back to one's accustomed place and there to greet his friends—surely this was enough to turn one's mind. Yet, as the old routine returned, all came to appear quite real and natural again.

Mysteries remained. What had happened to the Russians? It was fair to suppose that the deaf and dumb giant with his six blacks had somehow spirited them away. But how? When? Where to? What had become of this deaf and dumb master of the floes?

Curlie and Joe often wandered over the floes in search of the skin roofed cabin of snow and its occupants, but always in vain. It was all very mysterious and disturbing. At times Curlie felt that the Russians had escaped to the mainland and might, when least expected, return with hundreds of armed companions to wreak vengeance on the *Sea Bear* and her

crew. Yet the days wore on and they did not appear.

Their fellow prisoners, two of the unfortunate young men who had by some means or another been induced to unfurl a flag on that barren, worthless island, had left the island prison to join them on the ship. There were also three Eskimos with these volunteer exiles.

The island stood off across the icefloes, grim and black as some enemy's frowning fortification. Because of the danger from the Russians, no small parties were allowed to visit the island. On three occasions the captain, having divided his men into two companies, sent one group to explore the island. These exploring parties found nothing of interest on the island save white fox tracks and a few ptarmigan, which, being very much the same as quail, added a prime delicacy to their regular bill of fare.

Once quiet and order had been restored on board ship, Curlie experienced a great curiosity to know the state of their dead whale which lay frozen in the ice. So, with the captain's permission, he and Joe went across the floes to the spot where the black mass rested.

"What do you know about that!" Curlie exclaimed, as they came near.

"Why—what—"

"It's just as it was the day I showed them the fish line."

"They took you seriously."

"Why shouldn't they? I told them the truth."

So a few yards of fish line and two bits of ivory had saved them seventy casks of oil and a thousand pounds of bone. What's more, it gave the entire crew a definite task to work at through the long, long night which soon came down upon them.

There was no visiting back and forth between the two ice locked whalers, and no more moonshine was in evidence.

"Kennedy," said Joe one day, "what became of the man you chased into the ice floes? The moonshiner from the *Adler?*"

Kennedy did not reply at once. When he did speak his tone was low and gruff. "Fell into a pool and never rose; at least if he did it was under the ice. I looked close. You don't just like to see a fellow human drown up here in this bleak world, not even if he deserves it."

That was all any of them ever said about it.

It might well be said that a girl in her teens has no place on a whale ship. Certainly she cannot be expected to reef a sail, cast the harpoon, haul away at a line, or tend the fires beneath the trying out kettles.

Gladys Ardmore was, perhaps, the only girl of her age who had ever shipped as a whaler. Yet, had you asked the roughest, most unlearned seaman on the ship which person of their company could least easily be spared during that long night, his answer without a moment's hesitation would have been:

"Gladys Ardmore."

Not the captain himself, nor J. Anson Ardmore, the owner, would have seemed half so important.

If you wish to know how the mental images of all that is good and beautiful in the world fade before one's very mind, until within six months they are no longer a power either for good or evil, ask any honest man who has been a prisoner in a land of desolation. The jungle, the desert, the great white wilderness, they are all the same. The memory of sweet music, of bright faces, of happy firesides, vanish like sheets of thin ice before a hot autumn sun.

But with a single example of youth and beauty before one—how changed it all is. Realizing, to some extent at least, her power for good, Gladys dressed each morning exactly as she might had she been going shopping or calling in a great city. Bright dresses, gleaming red scarf, orange colored sweater, clothing that stood out in bold relief against the dead white that lay about her; these were the spots of brightness that, animated by her joyously youthful body, brought life to the great white emptiness.

Music, too, was at their command. There was a piano in the foreward cabin, and a cornet, a violin, two saxophones, five Eskimo drums, and no end of small, cunningly devised instruments, made up a band that had probably never been equalled aboard a whaler. So Gladys did her bit, and it was such a big bit that before the long winter was half over the seamen came to the captain in a body, demanding that her share of the proceeds of the voyage be doubled. To this the captain smilingly assented.

That night, seated at the piano, Gladys sent forth such peals of music that first set the sailors smiling, then dimmed their eyes with tears. She played as

she thought. She sang of their kindness and generosity, and of the day when, please God, with the ship's hold filled with dark treasure, they would steam away for the land of sunshine and flowers. She played for the sad-faced little brown people who lived always in the land of the long night, and for their tiny hospital that had so little and needed so much. Then, in a final joyous burst of triumph, as she realized how much might go to their hospital, if good fortune was with them, she brought every mother's son of those seamen to their feet with a wild war whoop and a feeling in their hearts that this wonderful, glorious girl might have every last gold dollar of their share, if her blessed hospital needed it.

As for Curlie and Joe, their thoughts were always of the future, of the spring break-up, of the vanishing floes, of broad, black waters, and whales, whales, whales, whole schools of them, leaping like dolphins, sporting like sea lions, standing on their heads like walrus. Whales, whales, whales, the picture was always before them. That they might be fully prepared for that event, they labored day in and day out.

The work they did was performed in a sort of

temporary cabin they had erected on the after-deck. There, warmed only by some improvised seal oil lamps, they toiled incessantly with hammer, screw-driver and pliers. The material they used was insulated wire, screws, knobs, switches and hard rubber boards. Curlie and Joe, as you will know well enough from reading our other books, "On the Yukon Trail" and "The Seagoing Tank," were radio experts of the highest order. They were determined to make the utmost use of their scientific knowledge in the spring campaign.

The ship carried no heavy radio equipment. The sets they were constructing were compact and light, not over eighty pounds.

Curlie and Joe did not propose in the future to trust themselves among the Arctic floes, even in so safe a craft as a whaleman's motor boat, without the aid of a radio set to keep them in touch with their ship and to serve as a call in case of disaster. For that matter, when spring came, they meant to fly a little, too, and the plane, though a small one, was fitted for carrying one of these radio sets along with her two passengers.

For the present they contented themselves in erecting a small station on the island some eight miles from the ship, and in sending messages back and forth from ship to shore and from shore to ship again.

After many trials, and not a few disappointments, they succeeded in perfecting an equipment which, either on a whaleboat or seaplane, could be carried in a narrow and compact space, and might be depended upon to send or receive messages for a distance of a hundred miles or more.

As for the seaplane, there had been some talk and much mystery about the use this was to be put to. It had been at Curlie's suggestion that Mr. Ardmore had included the plane in the ship's equipment. It was not a large plane; one of those small, speedy affairs used so often in the war for driving off the enemy's great bombing planes.

During the summer and autumn hunting the weather had continued so foggy that Curlie had not thought it worth while to bring the parts from the hold and assemble this plane. Now, however, as the long night vanished and the short days grew longer and longer, he and Joe, with the aid of the ship's car-

penter, constructed a rude sort of hangar on deck. Beneath this they assembled the seaplane, tightened every bolt and screw, tested out her engine and prepared her in every way for the spring hunt, which Joe, Curlie and Gladys always referred to as the "Joyous Adventure." Was it to be a joyous adventure? They often found themselves seriously asking that question. Since only time could answer it, they continued to think of it joyously, and this did much to allay the dullness of the great white silence.

CHAPTER VIII.

OLD DRAGON HEAD

Who has words to describe the joy that comes to one, who, having for nine long months watched with weary eyes a changeless panorama of the ice and snow of his Arctic prison, again sees the first signs of spring appear. The first glad winging of wild ducks. How welcome! The first honking of geese—how musical to his silence-wearied ears! The breaking of the ice and the appearance of dark water holes. How he counts these signs one by one. How he rubs his hands together and exclaims; "To-morrow, the next day, the day after, I shall be free!"

The little company on the *Sea Bear* felt it. Their faces grew radiant in the ever increasing light of day. It made them more kindly, more thoughtful of others. The very ship felt it and, groaning and chafing day and night at her ice anchors, she wore away half the rust of winter from her hull ere she at last was free.

And then one day there came the south wind. Gentle at first, like the whisper of a child, it grew and grew in volume until at last it was a great, strong, angry mother driving all before her.

The ice was ready for the change. Breaking up, freeing itself from the shore, like some great white fleet it sailed silently and majestically away, leaving only black, silent water behind.

That same day her crew struck a whale, a great seventy foot, hump-back whale. Nor were they the only ones who struck him. A boat's crew from the *Adler* struck him as well.

Hardly had the watchers on the deck of the *Sea Bear* seen the bleak shores of Wrangell Island fade from sight than there came a welcome call from the crow's nest:

"Blow! B-l-o-w, sir! There he spouts!"

"Where away?" shouted the captain.

"Quarterin' the starboard bow, sir, a short mile."

"Stand by to lower," shouted the captain. Everyone jumped. Not a man on the ship but was ready and eager, after long months of forced inaction, to be away after the great prey. As for Curlie Carson

and Joe Marion, they tingled with excitement as they leaped into their boat ready to be lowered. And Gladys, the sporting blood of her father racing in her veins, dropped into a place beside them.

"Lower away," ordered the captain, "lower away, and after him. A new rifle to the harpooner who first strikes him!"

Down they went. In splashed their motor boats.

Pop-pop-pop, away they sped.

"He's a bull, and a big one!" said Kennedy, his keen gray eyes afire with hope of battle. "Your motor, Curlie. Give her all you've got. And you, Soquina, is your harpoon ready?"

"Aye, sir."

"Stand by to shoot."

"There he blows! There he breaches. Hard to port, sir! Hard to port!"

The boat swung round, then shot ahead, sending spray like rain in their faces.

"Blow—blows."

This time the whale was not ten boat lengths away. His twin spouts rose like the rush of a gusher.

"Steady!" The wheel whirled. The motor

churned softly. White foam flew. Gladys saw the head of the great beast here, his tail there.

"How—how huge! How terrible." Her face blanched. Then of a sudden, with a blow that sent them sprawling—all but the harpooner, who took steady aim and fired—the boat struck the great black mass.

Came a shot, a swirling of waters, a singing of ropes, and the whale was away.

"Well struck," said Kennedy as he watched the rope play out.

A second they waited, ten, twenty, thirty seconds, a minute, but there came from below no dull boom of exploding bomb.

"She failed us!" Kennedy's face went blank.

What he said was doubtless true. The charge of the harpoon, gone stale or damp during the long winter, had failed to explode.

It was a difficult situation. They had the whale and he had them, at least he had their harpoon and some hundreds of fathoms of rope; yet he was as well and husky, as dangerous a monster as though no harpoon had been thrust into his side. There was

nothing left now but to have recourse to the old fashioned lance, if they came close enough, or to launch a second harpoon.

"There he blows!"

"Your motor!" Kennedy, standing on his seat, sent his craft straight on toward the whale who had once more risen for air.

With unexpected good fortune, they had closed in on him until in another second Soquina would have fired his second harpoon, when of a sudden a strange thing happened. A ten foot wooden shaft, with a steel barb fastened to a long brass tube at the end of the shaft, came hurtling over the after part of the whale, straight toward their boat.

"Jump!" shouted Kennedy. "Jump for your lives!"

Without in the least knowing what it was all about, Curlie, Joe and Gladys leaped straight into the sea.

They were not a second too soon. With a shock that all but stunned them and sent cataracts of water flowing over them and splinters of wood rocketing through the air, an explosion tore their boat to shreds.

Curlie's first thought was for Gladys. Once he

had located her and found her swimming strong and free, he took one look for the whale. The monster had disappeared, but not far from the spot where he had been a boat was plowing through the water at a terrific rate.

"A boat from the *Adler,*" he muttered. "They threw that loaded hand harpoon; threw it with malice aforethought. Knew we'd strike the whale first if they didn't. They'd kill us all for a hundred barrels of oil and a few hundred weight of bone. Here's hoping old whale does them in with his flukes."

His reflections were interrupted by the put-put-put of a motor boat. It was one of their own, manned by Captain Townsend himself. In ten minutes time they were all safely stowed away in this second boat.

"Well, we lost her," said Kennedy grimly.

"Yes, but thank God, you're all safe. It was a foul act. I saw it all. They meant that harpoon for your boat, not for the whale at all," replied the captain.

"Look!" exclaimed Curlie.

All eyes were turned in the direction his finger pointed. Not far away the black bulk of the *Adler*

loomed above the sea. Closer, traveling at such a speed that she was one white mass of foam, was the boat that had struck the whale. Between them was the whale. The *Adler,* moving forward so that she might be close in at the time of the killing, had, because of the sudden headlong rush of the whale, gotten squarely in his path.

For ten seconds Curlie's active mind was busy with the question of the outcome of events should the whale strike squarely into the side of the ship. More than one wooden craft had gone to the bottom stove in by a whale. It had even been reported that in the South polar seas a steel boat had been rammed and sunk by a fighting sperm whale.

Startling events were imminent. With a suddenness that was amazing in so huge a creature, the whale swerved to the right, missing the stern of the ship by an arm's length.

There can be no doubt but that the watchful captain of the *Adler* heaved a sigh of relief. His relief was but for a second. Having rounded the ship, the whale must have turned again to the left, for ten seconds had not elapsed when there sounded forth

from the vicinity of the *Adler's* propeller strange screaming shrieks. At the same instant the motor boat towed by the whale leaped forward as if shot out of a gun.

One could not have counted six before it crashed against the ship with such force as burst it like an eggshell. At the same instant there came the sound of some greater body being hurled against the side of the ship, and from the ship such a grinding and groaning as one might have expected from her had she been possessed of a soul and was in mortal agony.

All this consumed ten seconds. After that, for a full minute, all was silence.

"There's retribution for you!" whispered Kennedy.

"Swift and sure," murmured Captain Townsend.

Lines were thrown from the *Adler* to the boat crew struggling in the water.

"Nothing we can do there," said Kennedy. "Little as they deserve it, we'd help them in distress."

"She'll be laid up for a week," said Captain Townsend. "You see," he said, turning to Gladys, who still seemed somewhat puzzled at the turn events had

taken, "when the whale rounded the stern of their ship his rope caught in the propeller and wound up on the propeller as if it were the drum of a windlass. That banged the boat against her side, and the whale as well, and it fairly tore the insides out of the ship's driving power."

"And—and the whale?" said Gladys.

"There! There he blows!" exclaimed Curlie, pointing away to the left.

"That is about the toughest whale I ever heard anything about," said Joe, grinning.

"No use going after him now," said the captain. "Couldn't get an iron in him in a three days' chase."

"Say, did you notice anything unusual about that whale's head?" said Curlie.

"No. What?" said Kennedy suddenly sitting straight up.

"Some sort of dark markings like—well, like the marking on a Chinese dragon."

"Are—are you sure?" Kennedy was leaning eagerly forward.

"Saw it plainly."

"Then it was him. I suspected it all the time."

"Was who?" It was Curlie's turn to be curious and eager.

"Old Dragon Head, the best known, most feared whale of the Arctic. And to think," he sighed, "that we had a line on him and they spoiled our chance!"

They were destined to meet Old Dragon Head again, more than once, and under quite different circumstances.

CHAPTER IX

ABOVE THE ARCTIC SEA

Ten minutes after the destruction of the *Adler's* boat and the extraordinary escape of Old Dragon Head, a fog so dense that Curlie could scarcely see the boat mate sitting directly before him settled down upon the sea. It was with the greatest difficulty that the captain of the *Sea Bear* directed the course of his motor boat back to the ship. Had it not been for the hoarse hoot-hoot of the ship's foghorn they might have spent many fog drenched and hungry hours upon the sea.

This fog hung over the waters for three days. So dense was it that had a whale come nosing right about the ship there would have been no chance of their catching him.

Captain Townsend paced the deck. His brow was knit, his hands were clenched.

"They will beat us now," he repeated over and

over. "They have a better knowledge of the whaling fields that we have." He spoke of the *Adler's* captain and his crew. One could scarcely blame him for bitter thoughts about them. They surely had treated their fellow whalesmen of the *Sea Bear* in a shabby manner.

"They will beat us now," he would repeat, as he strode the length of the bridge and back again. "I had hoped the accident to their propeller might give us a lead, but now—well, one can repair his engines and his propeller in a fog. What's to hinder? We're beaten, I say. Beaten. Beaten by a man who doesn't deserve to win."

Curlie Carson never answered these complaints. He realized that would prove useless. For all this he had his own idea as to whether they were beaten or not. His eyes often strayed to the improvised hanger on the after deck. More than once he strolled back there to duck down beneath the canvas, to test a stay, tighten a bolt, turn a knob, or throw a switch. These tests, always quite satisfactory, appeared to relieve his mind.

"No," he would mutter, "no, we're not beaten yet."

On the morning of the fourth day, as the sun emerged from the sea, it lifted the fog and left the ocean a blue-black expanse with a sky above it washed clean as a nun's white hood. Curlie thought the right hour had come.

"How about the seaplane?" he asked the captain.

"That thing!" the captain grumbled. "Why that thundering affair will drive every blessed whale to the North Pole."

"I don't think so," said Curlie, modestly.

"Tell you what," said the captain, suddenly. "She goes fast, doesn't she?"

"Seventy-five miles an hour."

"How far will your radio carry?"

"Hundred miles, I think."

"Tell you what; you give us a radius of fifty miles for our boats. You fly, fly high, you understand, for fifty miles, then begin your search above the sea. Haven't a bit of faith in it, but if you see white water rise up out of the sea like some blessed chrysanthemum, then you chirp right up with your radio. We'll shape our course that way straight off, providing we're not tied fast to a big whale or cut-

ting in. But mind you, fifty miles and no nonsense. No nonsense, sir."

After assuring him that there would be no nonsense and that his orders should be carried out to the letter, Curlie hurried aft. He was exceedingly eager for a try-out of his plans. It was his belief that a seaplane might be used as a scout for whales, because of its speedy flight and its ability to pass over narrow lines of drifting ice. While a ship must spend days cruising around them, the pilot of a seaplane might scan as many square miles of water in a day as a ship could in a season.

"Of course it will work," he had exclaimed to Joe. "We'll have a school of whales spotted and a shipload of them bagged before the watch in the crow's nest of the old *Adler* has shouted 'Blo-o-o! Blo-o-o!' one time."

As is to be seen, the skipper, a hard-boiled old salt, was yet to be convinced. It was his opinion that the thundering motors of the plane would drive the whales before them into uncharted seas.

Only one problem troubled Curlie. As he directed the removing of the canvas from above the plane, he

asked himself over and over, "Who shall go with me? Who shall it be?"

Joe Marion was not to go. It had been agreed that he should remain in the vicinity of the ship until some word was received from Curlie. Next to Curlie, Joe was the person on board who knew most about radio. More than that, he had a great desire to have a try at whaling.

"It's not so much that I need a mechanic in that back seat of the plane," Curlie had said to Joe. "I'm enough of a mechanic for that small plane. What I need is company, and a pair of eyes to spell me at scanning the ocean. Sharp eyes, that's all my buddy needs."

He was still studying the question when a great wooden arm swung out over the *Gull,* as Curlie had named the ivory white plane.

It was a solemn and dramatic moment, the launching of that plane, which might easily, so Curlie thought, mark a new epoch in the whaling industry. The great wooden arm, hanging stiff above the plane, put out a hand, a hook attached to a steel cable. The donkey engine pop-popped and great wheels rattled

and roared. Like a silver toy bird suspended from a black string, the plane was lifted in air, then swung gracefully out over the sea and lowered silently as a gull to its surface.

A trial flight of a short distance was proposed. The captain gave his assent. For this trip Curlie and Joe buckled themselves in. The motors hummed and roared. With ever increasing speed the *Gull* moved across the water until with a sudden spring, shaking the water from her, she leaped gracefully into the air.

With enraptured gaze one pair of exceedingly bright eyes watched that graceful leap in air, and in that look one might have read the answer to Curlie's question, "Who shall go with me?"

The eyes belonged to Gladys Ardmore. As the plane became a dot in the distance, her eyes shone, her cheeks burned and her bosom throbbed as she whispered to the gray haired man who stood by her side;

"Oh, Father, let me go with him."

"It's a trifle dangerous, I'd say."

"Dangerous!" There was contempt for dan-

ger in the girl's tone. "And besides, danger with Curlie at the wheel?"

"With anyone at the wheel, in the Arctic. Think of Amundsen."

"But that was over ice, at the Pole."

"We'll ask Curlie about it."

When Curlie returned from the trial flight, which was successful in every way, Mr. Ardmore asked him his opinion of the danger of the flight. Curlie found himself at once engaged in a mental conflict. Company was all he wanted; a companion on that lonely search. Such a companion was now offering herself. There was no one in all the wide world that he would have chosen before Gladys Ardmore.

And yet, was it fair to accept? Was it safe? What right had he to take her on such a journey when the humblest cabin boy might serve the purpose as well?

He said this to Mr. Ardmore, and that gentleman assured him that on this journey every person on board was on the same standing as every other. If Gladys chose to go, and he to take her, it was quite all right.

As for Gladys, she grew quite indignant. "It is my trip as much as any of the others, isn't it?" she flamed up. "I am as much interested in a perfect season's catch as anyone on board, and this is the finest chance to do my bit. Why shouldn't I take my share of the risk? Why shouldn't I go?"

Curlie had learned long ago the futility of arguing with this rather wonderful girl, and down deep in his heart he really wanted her to go. He gave in to her argument rather easily. She descended the ladder, dropped lightly into her place and was strapped in. Then she waved a farewell to her father. The motor roared. She felt the breath of air on her cheek, leaned forward for the sudden lift, and the next moment found herself scanning the sea for the white, flower-like mist above the water that told of whales.

"What a joyous adventure!" she exclaimed, as the man-made sea bird, whose planes tilted more and more, nosed her way into the misty white cloud that shut out their view of the sea.

True to his promise, high in air where the thunder of his engines would be heard but faintly from the

sea, Curlie held to a straight away southeasterly course toward Behring Straits, where the whales should be swarming. When he had put fifty miles between them and the ship, having shut off his engine to allow his craft to volplane down, he turned to smile at the girl as he said;

"Behold! Here is our private hunting grounds."

CHAPTER X

AMONG MONSTERS OF THE DEEP

It was a perfect day. The sun shone out bright and clear through a cloudless sky. The ocean lay beneath them like a vast plane of glass. Here and there, like a flaw in the glass, a fragment of ice shone out white against the blue-black of the sea.

Suddenly land loomed ahead of them, then to right and left of them—rough peaks of granite wall.

"The Straits," said Curlie. "Yonder is America. Off to the right there is Russia. The two points straight ahead are islands."

So close were they to the surface now that Gladys caught glimpses of eider ducks floating on the placid surface.

Of a sudden the motors gave forth a roar and they were up and away again.

America! The word still rang in Gladys' ears. How she had thrilled at the sound of it! America.

The little village of Wales, nestling at the foot of Cape Prince of Wales Mountain, stood out a vivid mind picture. There were Eskimo there and white people too, white women and children. Almost a year had passed since she had seen a woman or child of her own kind. How she yearned for a sight of them, for the sound of their voices. She was tempted, sorely tempted, to ask Curlie to put in there for a few hours; an hour only, one short hour.

Shaking herself free from these haunting dreams, she threw one last fleeting glance toward the distant mountain peak, then resolutely turned her back upon it.

"The whales may come to-day," she told herself. "They may be here now. If only we can locate them, send the message back and call the ship here. If we are successful, how much it would mean to those seven gray haired veterans and to the people at the Cape."

Presently she caught sight of something that made her smile. Directly ahead of them, flying in the familiar "V" formation, was a flock of wild geese.

"We—we'll overtake them," she exclaimed.

Curlie had seen them, too. With a final burst of speed he came alongside. So close were they now that they could count their gray feathers, measure their craning necks, look into their bulging eyes.

"What sport!" She thrilled at this new adventure.

"Could almost reach out and take them by the neck," said Curlie, as once more with the engine silent they went gliding down.

"Look!" exclaimed Gladys suddenly. "What a strange sea. Seems to have grown great bunches of flowers."

Curlie gave one glance. "Whales!" he exclaimed. "A school of them. A gigantic school of them!"

It was true. There were literally hundreds of the monsters, all coming to the surface and blowing at once. Seen from above, their spouting was like a hundred white flowers blooming up from the depths of the dark sea.

It is a well known fact that as the whales have been hunted more and more—fairly driven from much frequented seas—not only have they sought more secluded spots, such as the Arctic Sea, but, as

if for mutual protection, they have gathered in larger and ever larger schools. Curlie and Gladys had come upon one of these great schools moving north.

"What a sight!" Gladys whispered as, coming closer, ever closer to the sea, they made out not only the spouting of these monsters but the very creatures themselves. "It's as if our plane were a butterfly above a pool filled with goldfish."

It was indeed a marvelous sight. Now a playful group swam round and round in a circle. Now they leaped high in air to stand on their heads in the boiling water and slowly sink. And now a larger group, having come upon a great swarm of shrimp, went racing here and there, helter-skelter, gathering their dinner.

So fascinating was the whole scene that Curlie, forgetting his task for the moment, all but allowed his plane to glide right down amongst them. What the outcome of such an adventure would have been none can tell. Certain it is that had they collided with one of these monsters there would have been little chance of their seeing those distant mountain peaks again.

With a suddenness that startled Gladys, the motors thundered. Up they went. Away went the whales, disappearing like magic.

"We frightened them away," said Gladys, speaking now through the tube. There was consternation in her tone.

"Can't be helped," said Curlie. "Couldn't land there. Had to get away. Won't go far, I guess. The *Sea Bear* will find them."

Once more they climbed rapidly skyward. Now the sea lay broad and black beneath them. Now it took on a grayish hue. And now it lost every suggestion of watery expanse.

"Might as well be above the solid earth, far as appearance go," Curlie told himself, "or ice, perhaps. I wonder if one could tell the difference? Depend on the amount of haze. Sure would be hard luck if one were obliged to land in the midst of the ice floes. It would be the end."

He thought of the daring explorer Amundsen, how he had landed in a narrow channel of water in the midst of a vast ice pack.

"If the channel hadn't been there, Amundsen would never have been heard from again," Curlie

told himself. "Came near being his end as it was." He shivered. "Hope nothing happens to us." He thought of his fair young companion, and repented his rashness in bringing her.

Then, of a sudden, he recalled his purpose in being so high in air.

"Have to get a message off," he told Gladys as, having shut off his motor, he set the machine volplaning downward.

The sending end of a radio equipment is a complicated affair. Curlie and Joe had simplified as much as possible the set which had been placed in the fusilage of the seaplane. They had done all in their power to insure instant success, but instant success did not come. Three times Curlie made the necessary connections, then started his motor as he attempted to get off a message. Three times he failed.

"Vibration of the plane has loosened some connection back there in the fusilage. Have to get back there. Can't do it in the air. Have to land."

Like a lone seabird circling for a landing, the *Gull* came gliding downward to at last go skimming away over the surface of the sea.

Once they had come to a stop, Curlie changed

places with Gladys and was soon lost to all else in his study of wires and connection posts of batteries and insulation and all else that made up his compact sending set.

He had just succeeded in locating the loose connection that had caused all the trouble, and was about to put it right, when his action was arrested by a cry of surprise from his companion.

"Curlie, look!" she exclaimed. "Only look!"

Curlie did look. Then he, too, stared.

"Confound them!" he muttered. "Who'd have thought they'd come up right here. Yet, here they are."

"There she blows," Gladys whispered. "There she white waters."

It was true. All about them, paying not the slightest attention to them, sporting, leaping, sinking, spouting, to right, to left, before, behind, were dozens of whales.

"Well, anyway," Curlie said a bit shakily, "we shan't lack for company. All the more reason for getting this message off. Can't move an inch. If I tried to taxi for the lift I'd be sure to smash right

into the beasts. Be lucky if one doesn't rise beneath us and toss us high, or switch us into eternity with his playful tail."

He went back to his instruments, leaving the girl to get what entertainment she might out of this gigantic company.

CHAPTER XI

JOE COMMANDS A WHALEBOAT

In the meantime excitement ran high on board ship. To a whaling ship this exceeding clearness of sky meant everything. One could detect a whale's spout miles away. One might be raised at any moment. There was some uncertainty about the sorting of crews. Who was to go in Kennedy's boat; who in the Captain's, and so on. There were four motor boats in all. These were too few. Several men, beside the ship-keeper and crew, must be left behind unless—well, there was an oomiak, a thirty-five foot Eskimo skin boat lashed down on the after deck. It was a boat of a sort, of course, but who would want to go in her? She carried no harpoon gun, only loaded and plain steel harpoon. She was a clumsy craft. One couldn't tack in her at all. And yet, many a whale, good ones too, have been caught by the crew of just such a boat.

The captain did not insist that anyone take this queer craft out. And yet, someone must, or when the great moment came, when the cry, "Blo-o-o! Blo-o-o!" rang out, some must be left behind.

"Tell you what," Joe said to the captain. "If you'll give me an Eskimo crew and let me command her, I'll take her out. Always did fancy I'd like a command. We'll provision her just as we do the others, so that if anything happens to separate us we will have food, water and warm blankets."

Nothing, it seemed, would be easier than that. With the two white men they had saved from the island, they had saved three Eskimos. One of these, Iyokok, had the name of being a splendid harpooner. Joe would be obliged to take him on reputation. None of the whites had seen him perform. The other Eskimo man from the island party was a good oarsman. The third was a girl; a very unusual Eskimo girl, Nowadluk by name. Joe had gotten on exceptionally well with Nowadluk. He had not believed before he saw her that an Eskimo girl could be good to look at, but this one was. With just the right curve to her chin, just the right brown and red in

her complexion, a sure fire twinkle in her eye, she cheered one up.

Nor was Nowadluk all looks. Strong and daring as the men of her race, dressed in her sealskin clothing, she had taken her part and held her own in the winter sports of the camp.

She could cook too. Having lived in a missionary's home, she had learned to make biscuits and pies. And oh! the doughnuts she could fry in fresh seal oil.

The moment Joe decided to become captain of the skin boat, he decided another thing: Nowadluk would be one of his crew.

When at last the welcome call came from the crow's nest;

"Blo-o-o! Blo-o-o! There she white waters," the girl, Nowadluk, cheeks all a-dimple, eyes all agleam, was the first to climb into the boat which was Joe's first proud command.

"Skin stretched over a framework of wood, like a dead elephant's skin drying over his ribs," was Joe's comment as he took a final look at that skin boat. "Old whale give it one slap and it's flat as a panama hat sat on by a fat man. But it's a boat, so out we go. Heave ho, there! Swing us out!"

There came a drop through air. Twelve pairs of white teeth gleamed in dark brown faces; twelve paddles flashed and they were the first to be away.

"No power but paddles and a small square sail; no force but a good right arm," Joe chuckled. "And see how the sun shines through her sides!"

"Think wait," said Iyokok. "Think you wait. Take more whale this one. Not many them other. Think that mine. Think wait. Think see."

"Hope you're right," said Joe, as he drew the head phones of his small receiving set over his ears, ready to catch the first faint message from his pal off there somewhere beyond the blue.

In spite of Iyokok's daring prophecy that they would get more whales than any other crew, the whale, with the four motor boats in hot pursuit, soon passed beyond their narrow horizon.

"Now what do you say about that?" Joe smiled as he looked at Iyokok, but he was keenly disappointed. He had willingly given up his place in the power boats to the gray haired men. The future held for them not many thrilling adventures, while for him, if good fortune favored him, and he did his part in keeping clean and fit, there were awaiting

him long reaches of life; life full of mystery and many adventures. He had hoped, however, that this tame, slow-going clog of a boat might bring him a thrill or two. Just now this seemed quite out of the question.

"Ubagok!" exclaimed Iyokok, his eyes suddenly bulging. "Look there!"

Joe could scarcely believe his eyes. Directly before them, rolling in the bright sunshine, making rainbows in the spout of every spray, was a huge whale. He was not a quarter mile away, and the field was all their own.

No word was needed from Joe. Silently the crew seized their paddles. Silently they dipped. Strong was every stroke, and not less strong the stroke of Nowadluk. The rhythmic swing of it all was a beautiful thing to feel and see. Distance melted before them like frost before the sun.

"A quarter of the way, half, two-thirds," Joe whispered to himself, telling off the progress of the boat.

A little later he nodded to Iyokok. The Eskimo boy's brown arms flashed. The hapoon hung in air. Ten tense seconds and—

Just then, without the least sign of haste, with all the deliberation of one who has thought of some simple task that must be performed, the monster rolled over and sank.

"Well!" Joe breathed.

"Come up again," mumbled the harpooner.

At once all eyes were upon the sea. This time it was the keen eyes of Nowadluk that spied him a half mile to the southwest.

Again the paddles gleamed and dipped. Again Joe's hopes ran high. The whale was a monster, a hundred barreler, hundred and fifty, perhaps. What a prize! What a triumph! If they only could. If—

But again the whale vanished.

Six times, with hope still alive, they located the whale and paddled furiously toward him. Six times he sank from sight, each time to rise at some spot to the southwest. Hope still ran high. At last would come their triumph. The ship was lost from sight. What of that? They had sighted a whale and would get him yet. What a joy!

Joe's admiration for his crew grew and grew until it knew no bounds. They were energy, persistency itself. They did not tire, nor did they complain.

Tireless as any of them, dimples showing, eyes gleaming, the girl Nowadluk, sitting in the stern close to Joe, wielded her paddle with the strength of a man.

Fully ten miles had been covered when at last the whale, appearing to tire, lay for an unusually long time upon the surface of the sea.

"Now we shall have him," Joe whispered.

"Yes, now!" Standing up in the prow, facing his men, Iyokok motioned for a silent stroke.

Slowly, boat length by boat length they crept forward. Still lying upon the surface of the sea the great creature appeared to sleep.

Ten boat lengths away, eight, five, three, the craft crept forward. The silence was so great that Joe could hear the heart beat of the girl beside him.

Then of a sudden, out of the air came a loud spoken word; "Joe! Joe Marion, are you there?"

Joe jumped straight in air. Did he make a sound? Undoubtedly he did. He had forgotten about the radio. Curlie was talking to him through the air.

And the whale? Was it some sound Joe made, or had he heard some other warning sound. Whatever it may have been, before Iyokok's arm could go

back for a throw the whale turned squarely on one side. And in turning he showed all the top of his broad head. What Joe and the entire crew saw was nothing less than a revelation.

"Old Dragon Head!" the Eskimo girl murmured.

"Dragon Head! No want," said Iyokok, throwing down his harpoon. "Dragon Head. No can do."

"All quiet now," warned Joe. "It's Curlie. He's found something. I have him on the air."

At that moment the water which had lain so placidly about them began to ripple. Long silver bands, shot through with flickering movement, spread here, there, everywhere. A brisk breeze had come down from the north.

CHAPTER XII

STALLED IN MID AIR

During all this time what had been happening to Gladys and Curlie? Nothing serious, but their situation was one of grave danger.

"You'd think they'd go away," said Gladys, looking off at the dark monsters that continued to leap about them.

"Yes, or that the slight current would carry us out of their midst."

It certainly was a nerve-trying situation. To be surrounded by those massive beasts; to catch the rumbling whistle of their spouting, now to feel the spray of a spouting whale on your cheek. To know that any moment, should one blunder upon you, you are doomed; yet to feel quite powerless to move and equally powerless to defend yourself—this is nerve-wracking, indeed.

In the midst of all this, as if his life depended upon

it, Curlie worked at knobs and switches, getting off a message.

"There, now," he murmured. "She's right. Must get them right away."

"And—and yes," his face shone. "It's Joe. He's got me. He'll relay the news to the ship, and—and—he says he's coming!"

"What's that he says: A good stiff breeze. Sail here in two or three hours. That—that's good news. But two or three hours!" He glanced away at the spouting, splashing herd. "Two or three hours! A breeze, a good stiff breeze, he said. There is no breeze. Look at the sea!"

"Yes, yes, here it comes!" The girl pointed away to the north where the first ripple had appeared.

"That's right." Curlie's face went blank. "Fresh trouble in that. Old sea'll be lashing in half an hour; probably not much, but too much for a seaplane. What's to be done, I'd like to know. Can't go; too many whales. Can't stay; too much sea coming."

As he sat staring at the sea, a great black monster, back all awash, rose within twenty feet of the plane.

"Whales," Curlie muttered. "We came for

whales and we've got 'em. Got plenty. Think what it would mean if we had a boat—any kind of a boat at all."

"What was that Joe said; going to sail to us? What's become of the motors? Can't have gone wrong. I say, Gladys, Joe always has the luck. Bet he's got some sort of crazy craft without any power at all, but will beat 'em all to the herd, after all. Wish he was here right now. Wouldn't he scatter 'em, though? One thrust of the harpoon, one large boom, and away they go. Disappear like magic!"

Curlie was talking to keep up courage—his courage and the girl's. The situation was growing serious. The sea was breaking into furrows. The plane was beginning to toss dangerously. Should it topple over, all would be at an end. The whales were thicker than before. To make a start with them leaping up before the plane was not to be thought of.

"And yet," the boy thought to himself, "there's a way out. Simple way, too. I'm sure of it. Why can't I think. I—"

"Curlie," the girl broke in, "the whales are afraid of the thunder of the motors. Why can't you start

the motors without—without, how do you say it? Without throwing in the clutch?"

"Could," exclaimed Curlie. "What a dunce I am; what a double dumb dunce!"

He touched a switch. The motors thundered. Still the plane stood motionless. The black menace vanished. The plane moved forward, pitched a little, plunged a bit, righted herself, skimmed the crest of the waves, appeared to rest on one for an instant, then went soaring away.

"How wonderful!" the girl breathed.

Had she seen Curlie's face she would have detected a scowl there. He was studying a dark gray cloud just before them. Another moment, and they were in the midst of it, a whirling, swirling, blinding snowstorm.

"Nothing to this," Curlie mumbled through the tube. "All I've got to do is hold our altitude and go straight on out of it."

There was to be something to it, nevertheless; a great deal to it, much more than he had guessed.

In the meantime, Joe was having the time of his

young life. When Curlie's welcome message was received telling of the great school of whales, Joe's skin boat was more than ten miles from the ship. Realizing the delay and probable defeat of his purpose, were he to attempt beating his way back to the ship, he had decided upon a bold stroke. After getting in touch with the ship by radio and learning that they had intercepted Curlie's message, he informed the captain that he meant to put on all sail and go directly to the hunting ground.

This was exactly what he was about. A glorious adventure it was, too. Nothing like it has been experienced by a white boy since the days of Norse and Viking kings. To sail a thirty-five foot skin boat over a trackless sea, to lie back against the clutter of blankets, baskets and bundles and watch the sail bulge and swing, that was life. To see the odd craft dip until her very rail was submerged; to see the brown crew lift sealskin flaps to keep back the bursting seas, to look into the dancing eyes of his seamen and smile, that was life—life with a tang to it.

"That girl, Nowadluk," he thought to himself.

"I was a real sport to bring her. Might have had an able bodied seaman instead. Being a real sport, I call it."

How little he knew, how impossible for him to guess what this brown-eyed girl could and would mean to his first expedition in his first boat, his first command.

So, with the square sail bulging in the brisk breeze. they sped on. A great gray cloud scurried over them. Joe was glad it was not down close to the surface of the water.

"Couldn't see the whales in a storm," he told himself.

"See anything?" he asked his crew. The question was unnecessary. They had seen nothing, but they were watching; would watch to the very end. Not for nothing had they sailed these very waters in that kind of a boat all their lives.

"Mighty fine sort of crew," Joe told himself. "Couldn't be better. Couldn't—"

His restful thought broke short off and he stared blankly into space. A question came to him; a very disturbing problem. Could these Eskimo swim? He

had heard someone say, perhaps read it somewhere, that not one out of ten of these people of the North could swim, the reason being that Arctic waters were too cold for pleasure.

"Pretty mess if some old whale hits us a slap and knocks our boat into a soggy pancake," he grumbled to himself.

"Mighty good sports, these little brown folks," he thought, after a few moments contemplation. "Can't swim a stroke, yet they go after the biggest game in the world all the same. Oh well, I suppose nothing'll happen." He settled back to again lie there scanning the sea.

Something did happen, and the outcome was most astonishing.

In the meantime, in that very gray cloud that hung above Joe—or rather in one distant section of it—Curlie and Gladys soared and soared, looking in vain for a break in that whirling gray mass.

Curlie's mind was only half on their present situation. There was plenty of gas in their tank; at least there should be. He felt sure there was. They would fly out of the cloud sooner or later. His mind was

filled with a great content. An hour earlier he had proven the value of a seaplane on a whale hunt. He began to think of the unsolved problems, some of the mysteries yet to be unraveled, and of adventures yet to come.

His thoughts were cut short off by the sudden sputter of his motor. The next moment this sputter came to an abrupt end. Silence hung ominous on the gray clouds of snow.

" Motor gone wrong," he mumbled. " Have to go down. Hope it's not too rough."

CHAPTER XIII

OUT OF THE CLOUDS

Joe and his crew had met with strange and startling adventures. As with square sail bulging and booming they glided across the dark expanse of the Arctic, they came all of a sudden within sight of a monstrous whale. Instantly a command was on Joe's lips, the command that meant attack.

The words died on his lips, for Iyakok, the Eskimo harpooner, whispered in his ear:

"Wait. See!"

Joe did wait, and what he saw interested him immensely. The whale, after sinking from sight, began moving along beneath the water. So close was he to the surface that his movement might be detected by the ripples he created on the surface of the sea. Indeed, at times his dark bulk broke water.

"Feeding," whispered the Eskimo boy. "Quick come up."

It was true; a moment later, driving twin spouts of water high in air, the beast reappeared.

"Feeding," the Eskimo repeated. "Long time stay here. Want'a eat shrimps, that whale. Water not deep. Land not far."

His gaze swept the horizon and then with a broad grin he pointed away at a dark bulk looming out of the thin fog that had settled down over the sea.

"A ship!" Joe whispered excitedly. "The *Sea Bear* perhaps."

"Not ship," answered the Eskimo. "Land. Far-way Rock."

In the whispered conversation that followed Joe was assured that this great granite boulder, rearing itself hundreds of feet above the surface of the sea at a point miles from island or mainland, had long been a haven for Eskimo hunters. Though covering a surface scarcely larger than a common city block, it offered, on its lee side, perfect protection from the wildest storms that swept the sea.

Since the rock was not far away, and since the whale, a lone bull, was quietly feeding across the shoal that led up to the rock, Iyakok advised Joe to

make this great rock their base; to approach it on the lee side, to make a landing and deposit their blankets, their food supply and their radio equipment beneath the shelving sides of the rock. In this way, no matter what weather was encountered, their supplies and radio would be safe from dampness, for, as Iyakok explained, no rain ever entered those deep cut caverns beneath the rock's edge. Then, too, their boat would be lighter for the attack and for the ensuing struggle.

This advice Joe decided to accept. A half hour later, beneath a rocky canopy, with the sea murmuring at their feet, they found themselves partaking of a cup of tea, pilot biscuits and dried fish.

Joe was impatient at the delay, but an Eskimo is never in a hurry. "Besides," Iyakok explained, "mebby not come back soon. Mebby stay long time. Mebby plenty cold, plenty hungry, plenty wet."

This, Joe was to know in good time, came near to being a prophecy.

In the meantime, Curlie and Gladys had made a landing. On the way down, Curlie had thought some long, long thoughts. What might their landing place

be like? With his motor throbbing he might choose his landing place; with them dead he was at the mercy of chance. Was there ice beneath them? He fancied he caught its white gleam through the driving snow. Ice meant almost certain death. A gliding crash as their plane collided with the uneven surface of tumbled heaps of ice, then all would be over.

Even a single cake of ice no bigger than a floating brown seal might spell disaster. The seaplane, which was in reality a flying boat with a hull not unlike that of a large Eskimo kiak, would soon be speeding along on the surface of the water at the rate of fifty miles an hour. Should they strike ice, even of a hundred pound weight, while going at this speed, it would mean that the hull would be crushed like an egg struck by a rifle ball.

"And that," Curlie assured himself, "would be the end."

His thoughts raced on. The sea? Was it calm? Had the storm ruffled it? His motor? What had killed it? Could the repair be effected in a moment, an hour, a day? Or was the damage irreparable?

Visions of eternal drifting passed before his mind's eye.

Still they glided downward. Seconds seemed hours. Thoughts sped with the wild snow flakes that danced about him. A flock of wild ducks, suddenly surprised in their flight, sprang away into the white void beyond.

Then, of a sudden, a cry of joy escaped Curlie's lips. They left the snow cloud. They entered clear air. The sea, dark, silent, mysterious as always, but quite free of ice, lay beneath them.

"We'll make a perfect landing and be away in an hour." The boy's voice betrayed the thrill of joy that coursed through his being.

Was old Neptune, the god who rules the sea, gazing down upon that scene? Did he whisper: "In an hour," and did he laugh a derisive laugh? At any rate, the landing Curlie effected was quite perfect.

So silent was the approach of Joe's Eskimo skin boat upon the whale that fed across the shallows by Farway Rock that he became conscious of their presence only when, with a flash of a brown arm

Iyakok sent the steel deep into his black flank. Then, with a mighty swirling of waters, he sank.

The line played out at a terrific rate. The first big tub was empty, the second half empty when Iyakok, taking advantage of a few yards of slack rope, threw a turn of rope about a stout post forward. Instantly, with a shock that threw everyone back in his seat, the whale was away.

Cutting the little waves like a knife, their strange craft shot through the water. Fortunate it was that the boat was light and lightly loaded; fortunate, too, that the beams which ran along the sides were of ancient and tested timber.

All this time Joe was listening for a sound. Would it come? The line slacked. Had the shot failed? There had been trouble with their fuses. As he waited, breathlessly, the answer came. They heard a dull boom.

"Sounds as if it were directly beneath us," he said. An involuntary shudder seized him.

Well he might have shuddered, too, for with the suddenness of a water spout the great beast plunged from below. Had he been three feet to the right, the

boat would have been smashed and the crew lost. As it was, the prow was lifted six feet in air to come slapping down again.

The craft was not injured. A native skin boat is capable of withstanding a shock that would smash a white man's whaleboat to kindling. But Joe, caught quite off his guard when the boat tilted, was plunged into the sea. To his great consternation, a spare hand harpoon, made of steel, falling overboard at the same time had caught in the back of his stout canvas coat and hung there.

"It's the end," he told himself, as battling the waves and struggling at the same time to free himself from the death load on his back, he felt himself, in spite of every effort, going down, down to death.

"Those natives can't swim," he told himself. "They can't swim a lick. What folly!" He took a last long breath of God's clear, free air before the plunge.

"It's the end," he told himself quite calmly. Strangely enough, all sorts of unsolved mysteries raced through his mind. The old deaf and dumb man, the Russians, the crew of the *Adler,* all passed before his mind's eye.

"All there," he told himself. "Never solve them. Nev—"

But what was happening? Came a tug at his coat; another and yet another. "As if I were a fish and someone were hauling at the line," he thought. His lungs were bursting, but he held his breath. Was there now some mysterious sort of hope?

"It's queer," he thought. "Can't swim; those Eskimos can't swim."

Just then there came a mighty tug at his back and up he shot, up, up, up to the cool, clear, blessed air of day.

Once on the surface of the water he lay there panting. For ten seconds only he remained where he was. Then strong hands pulled him in.

Lying there on a heap of canvas he shut his eyes, convinced that it was all a dream.

He opened them soon enough. It was not a dream. Someone had saved him. Who? One glance told him. Well forward he caught the gleam of a pair of bare, brown shoulders.

He closed his eyes again. Those shoulders belonged to the girl, Nowadluk. She was changing into dry clothes. It was marvelous. He had brought her

along as a sporting proposition and because he liked her. He had even thought she could not be of any real service on the hunt. And here it had turned out that of all his crew she was the only swimmer.

"That little brown girl saved my life," he told himself.

It was true. She had seen it all, had been looking when he went over, had seen the harpoon catch and hold. Seizing a rope she had gone over after him. With remarkable presence of mind she had looped the rope over the end of the dead weight that was dragging him down. Then she had signalled her companions to haul away.

All this Joe realized in an indefinite sort of way. Then, with a final effort to bring life and action back to his benumbed limbs, he sat up and began tearing away at his sodden garments.

"Now for warm, dry clothes," he told himself.

He was not destined to know the comfort of dry raiment as soon as he hoped. As he allowed his eyes to roam the sea a startled exclamation escaped his lips. A little way from them the sea had suddenly become a churning whirlpool of froth and foam.

"Quick!" he exclaimed. "The whale! He is not dead! He will be upon us."

The very next instant, with a rush that paralyzed muscles and benumbed brains, the monster, in the last throes of death, towered above them.

Joe's keen mind told him on the instant that this spelled catastrophe. That thought was all he made of it. No time for orders, for backing away, for a mad dash to safety. Time for nothing. Like some gigantic roller in a steel mill, the huge black beast turned over and over in his death struggle. Had he been a steel roller, and had the boat been a mass of tin, he could not have rolled it out more smoothly. Every binding was broken. Every band and brace, every beam and rib was free. When he had passed the thing was no longer a boat, but a great floating mass of soggy walrus skin to which pieces of wood of different lengths and sizes were attached here and there.

Joe had seen it coming. So had the Eskimo girl. They had jumped together. How it came about that he had jumped the boy could not tell. Certain it was that his mind was so nearly paralyzed by the shock

that for some time afterward he could only think of the thing they had been after.

"The whale," he thought to himself. "Can't lose the whale. Big explosion. Probably die. Hundred barrels. Fifteen hundred of bone. Get the whale—"

It was with a strange and sudden snap that his mind swung around to the fact that a calamity had happened. The Eskimos could not swim, and now they were battling vainly with the sea.

"Gone!" he muttered. "Probably all gone!"

He looked at the floating rubbish. His eyes fairly popped from his head. They were all there, clinging to the wreck, making the best of it. All there? No. One was gone. The sea had swallowed him up.

"Brave fellows!" he exulted. "Great people, these Eskimos."

At that he rushed to their aid. The Eskimo girl was there ahead of him. Three big sealskins filled with air, used in hunting to mark the spot where a whale or walrus goes down, had been in the bow of the boat. The girl was attaching these to the wreck. They would buoy it up and save the men from sinking. Joe helped her at that. The task was soon completed.

After that there was only one thing left to do, and Joe and the girl did it. Seeking out drifting paddles, they mounted each a sealskin buoy and began to paddle.

It was to be a long and all but hopeless task. Farway Rock was but faintly visible in the distance. Somehow, with their precious burden of human life, they must reach its sheltering shores. They could expect no assistance from the others. It was all they could do to cling to the dripping, wave washed wreck. It was up to the two of them, a girl and a boy. If the current was set away from the island they could not make it. If a sudden squall struck them, all was lost. They could but hope and pull. Pull they did until their backs ached, their hands burned and their eyes grew dim.

For a long time, with aching arms and with legs paralyzed by the freezing water, they continued to battle for their helpless crew. As the wood of the broken boat became water soaked the whole affair sank lower in the sea. Now a wave, larger than its mates, swept over them, burying the entire unhappy crew in stinging brine. But when it was past they still clung to their places and smiled.

"They are brave," Joe thought. "Who would not fight for them?"

Again he bent his back to the heart breaking task.

Were they making headway? Would they win at last? The answer seemed in doubt. But, yes, they were gaining a little. The outline of Farway Rock became more and more clearly defined. The scream of the many birds grew louder. The rush of water against the rocks sounded more distinctly. Yes, they were gaining. There was hope.

So they battled on. The sun sank beneath the horizon. To the twilight was added fog. The sea calmed. Above them, through the thin fog, the stars shone dimly. They were hungry. There was no food. They were weary. They must not pause. Sleep closed their eyes. They must not sleep.

A white flash shot through the water. Was it a shark? It was gone. Would it return? Wild fancies lighted up Joe's weary brain. Mechanically, and with no power back of it save an undying will, his arms rose and fell.

Then all at once his foot touched something. Was it a rock? Too weary to even guess, he paddled on. Then his feet dragged on something.

"Shoal," he muttered hoarsely. "It's a shoal. We—we are—thank God! We are here!"

Staggering like a drunken man, he made his way along the shoal toward the shore. Once there he hauled away on the line until one by one the chilled and exhausted crew were brought to shore.

There were no shouts of joy. All were too weary for that. There was thanksgiving enough, just the same.

Sometime later Joe awoke from a dream in which he had battled all manner of monsters of the deep; awoke to find Iyakok and Nowadluk smiling down upon him.

"Got whales now," said Iyakok.

"No. Lost one." Joe sat up.

"Not lost. Found that one. Dead that one. Bring him in that one."

To his great astonishment Joe found that this was all true. After a hasty meal, his crew had relashed their boat and had gone for the whale. They had found him floating not far from shore and had brought him in.

Upon seeing this, Joe's pride in the crew knew no bounds.

"Captain must know of it," he said. "Have to get the radio outfit going. Must get in touch with the ship. I'm sure no boat has done better. Get the radio going at once."

Fortunately, you will remember, the radio set had not been in the boat at the time of the wreck. It had remained on a dry, rocky shelf. It was there now, and would, Joe believed, soon respond to his touch.

CHAPTER XIV

ADRIFT

Curlie and Gladys, on swooping down from the clouds, landed silently and sweetly upon a smooth, gently rolling sea. There their good fortune ended. Ten minutes after they had landed Curlie knew exactly what the trouble was, and knew at a glance that such trouble could not be remedied.

Being a skillful mechanic, he had not spent five minutes with his motor ere he discovered that it was in perfect order. With a sinking heart he made his way to the petrol tank. There the trouble lay. The tank was empty.

"No gas!" he muttered as he crawled back to his seat. "Not a drop." Cold perspiration stood out in beads on his brow. "Must have sprung a leak. All gone. Every drop."

"Cheer up, Curlie," Gladys said, smiling at his evident consternation. "It can't be so bad. The sea

is calm. The ship must be coming this way. All we need to do is to get in touch with them by radio, give them our position, and they will come to us."

"By radio," said Curlie without lifting his head. "Sure by radio—if we could. But we can't. The plague of radio is that it won't operate without power. There's power in an airplane's motor, plenty of it. I trusted to that. Generators run by the motor were to furnish the electric current for my radio. The motor is dead, so the radio is dead. This will be a silent night, far as we are concerned. We won't disturb the air any. We can hear right enough; will hear, too. They'll be calling us from the ship. Joe will be calling us. We'll hear. Oh yes, we'll hear aplenty, but we won't reply.

"Do you see that bit of ice over there?" he lifted his head to point away at a solitary white fragment of salt water ice.

The girl nodded.

"Well, we're here just as that bit of ice is; got just as much power of locomotion as it has. The only difference is, we won't melt. Perhaps it won't either; depends on how cold the water is where it's going and how much ice there is up there."

"Going? Why, Curlie, are you out of your head? It's not going. It's standing still."

"No." Curlie's tone was gentle and sober. "It's not standing still. It's going somewhere. So are we. Nothing ever stands still in the ocean close to Behring Straits. There are currents here. They carry everything at the rate of a mile or two an hour to—"

"Where to, Curlie?"

"To—well, the Eskimos call it the Land of the Peeleuktuk, the land of missing men. Their hunters, lost on the ice floes, drift away to that land and never return; that is, almost never. I did hear of one man who drifted forty days; went two hundred and fifty miles and landed safely after all.

"That's not to be expected, though," he added after a moment's thought. "That bit of ice over there is drifting toward the North Pole. So are we. Let's make it a race; see who'll win." His laugh was a bit uncertain.

"But Curlie, they'll be looking for us on the ship. You promised father we'd be back in four hours. When we fail to appear, they'll come in search of us."

"Yes," said Curlie, "your father would do that. Not all the whales in the seven seas could prevent his

doing that. But a white speck on an empty sea is not so easy to find."

"They're coming this way. We called them."

"Yes," said Curlie, "they are coming where the whales were. We are not there now. No whales here." His eyes swept the empty sea. "We cruised about a lot in that snow cloud. It will be hard for them to find us.

"But then," he added more cheerfully, "there are rockets in the fusilage, four of them. It will be night after a while. We'll send one up, when it is dark. They'll be looking for us by that time. The rockets can be seen for many miles. Here's hoping!"

The rock on whose shelving base Joe and his Eskimos had found shelter was like some great skyscraper rearing itself up out of the sea; the principal difference being that, while a skyscraper frequently spreads out over a wider space at its base, this rock, torn at by wind, waves and grinding ice, was much narrower at its base than at its summit. At first sight of it Joe felt a tremor of fear run up his spine.

"Looks like a balancing rock that might topple into the sea," he said to Iyakok.

"No fall," the Eskimo answered, showing all his white teeth in a grin. "Long time stand. Father, grandfather, mine, see him. Long time stout. No fall."

And, like a skyscraper, this rock was inhabited. A million screaming sea birds that nestled on its broken sides and its crest whirled wildly over their heads. Little parrot-like auks continually bobbed about on the water, while black crowbills, like silent nuns, ranged themselves on rocky shelves above them.

"Won't starve, anyway," Joe said to Nowadluk.

And indeed they would not. While some of the younger and more daring members of the crew climbed to precarious heights for eggs, others wielded hastily constructed nets to capture many a fluttering auk.

Iyakok, with unusual skill, stalked a seal asleep on a slippery rock and brought him in for his share.

"Could stay here for an indefinite time," Joe told himself, contentedly squinting at the crackling driftwood fire. "Crusoe and the Swiss Family had nothing on us."

"Man, oh man!" he whispered a moment later as he looked at the battle-scarred rocky wall. "How

the waves must crack and thunder against that rock during a heavy storm. Not so safe, after all. Here's hoping the sky clears soon and shows us our ship in the offing."

"Our ship," he thought presently. "Our ship or one of her boats. Who can be sure that it will be one of these we see first. Maybe a boat from the *Adler*. Pretty sort of a row, then. Probably try to claim our whale. Captain said we'd have to look out for them. They'll blame us for that mess they got into with old Dragon Head, though they have only themselves to blame for that."

That his Eskimo crew would fight, he knew well enough. The crooked and crusty captain of the *Adler* had sailed these waters for thirty years. Eskimos had many times gone with him on his northern cruises, and always to their sorrow. When they had refused to go of their own free will he had lured them aboard his ship by promises of needed trade goods, then had shanghaied them, sailed away with them and made them, men and women alike, slaves to him and his savage, drunken crews. Little wonder that every Eskimo on the coast hated and feared him.

"Yes," Joe told himself, "they'd fight, but here's hoping they won't have to do it."

During all this time, what has been happening to the *Sea Bear* and her motor boats? No great good fortune had befallen them. Having chased a large whale for an hour and having lost him, they had been on their way back to the ship when Curlie's message came telling of the big school of whales close to the Straits.

The motor boats had been taken aboard and the ship's prow turned toward the Straits. They had arrived just in time to catch a glimpse of the rich harvest that awaited them; had counted thirty-three whales spouting at one time and had been about to lower for them when, of a sudden, down came the blinding snow. There they dropped anchor to wait the clearing of this snow flurry.

Some hours later Mr. Ardmore might have been found seated in his cabin. Though the snow sifting in through the open window spread spots of dampness over the rug and furnishings of the apartment, he did not rise to close it. He did not wish it closed.

He was listening, had been listening for some time for the distant throb of motors. Curlie and Gladys had scarcely disappeared from sight when he began to experience misgivings regarding that venture.

"Gladys shouldn't have gone," he told himself. "Young people nowadays are too venturesome."

He rose to pace nervously up and down his narrow compartment. He drew his watch from his pocket for the twentieth time.

"Five hours," he muttered. "Said they'd be back in four. Couldn't find us in this snow cloud, except by the help of the radio.

"The radio!" he exclaimed. "Confound Curlie! If he's down or something, why don't he get in touch with us by radio?"

Darting to a tube, he called into it: "Raney!"

"Yes sir," came back through the tube. Raney was the young seaman in charge of the *Sea Bear's* radio during the absence of Curlie and Joe.

"Get anything from the air?" Mr. Ardmore demanded.

"Not a thing."

"Couldn't Curlie reach us by radio if his machine were down?"

"Yes sir, unless—" Raney hesitated.

"Unless what?" the magnate snapped.

"Unless his motors were dead."

"Motors dead?"

"His motors supply power for his radio."

"I see. Then they might be drifting in this open Arctic Sea in that—that blasted flying contraption of theirs without being able to move about on the sea or get in touch with ships."

"Could be. Let's hope he's not, sir. He—"

The radio man broke short off.

"Wha—what's that?" the magnate demanded.

For a considerable time there came no answer to his urgent questioning. In the end there came in apologetic tones: "I caught a little something, sir. Came in faint. Thought it might be Curlie using low power transmission. Took a lot of tuning in. Got it at last. Was a singer down in Frisco singing, 'Yas, sir, that's my baby'. Sort of funny, don't you think?"

Mr. Andmore did not laugh. The time might come when he would consider this a huge joke. For the present, matters of serious importance were before him. His only daughter was missing. Every

moment that passed added to his weight of anxiety.

"Raney," he said soberly, "get off a message every half hour to Curlie and to—to Gladys. Give our position and tell them if the plane is down, to hang on for their lives. Tell them we're coming to find them."

"Yes sir."

Once more, after lighting his pipe and puffing at it vigorously for a moment, Mr. Ardmore seated himself in his leather chair to stare moodily at the wild dance of snowflakes outside his window.

CHAPTER XV

MADDENING MESSAGES

Curlie experienced a real thrill when Raney's first message came to him strong and clear.

"Listen, Gladys!" he exclaimed, clapping a head set over her ears.

Gladys did listen. Her cheeks flushed, her eyes shone, and for a moment a tear glistened there.

"Just think!" Her voice was hoarse with emotion. "As soon as this they have missed us. They are ready to give up all that splendid chase of the great prize, dark treasure, for us. Oh, Curlie, if only it hadn't happened!"

"Yes, but it did, and here we are." He seemed downcast.

Quick to sense his feelings and to realize that he blamed himself for their misfortune, the girl put out a hand of comfort.

"It wasn't your fault, Curlie. You couldn't have

helped it. They'll find us soon enough. Then there is all the summer for whaling."

If the boy had misgivings about the *Sea Bear* being able to find them; if he had dreams of endless drifting with death at its end; if he glanced uneasily away to the northwest whence came wild Arctic gales that sent little boats scurrying for port, that tore up the anchors of great three-masters and drove them snow laden through Behring Straits and into the open sea beyond; if he had visions of their frail aircraft attempting to ride such a storm, he kept all these reflections to himself and talked of other things.

It was strange the things they did talk of. As night stole down upon them, as silence and darkness hung over them, they talked of bright lights and sweet music; of flitting birds of brilliant plumage; of many colored garments, sweaters, caps and scarfs of red, orange, green and blue.

With no food save a few malted milk tablets, with only one canteen of water to slake their thirst, they talked of food, of crisp roast duck, of mince pie and cranberry sauce, of ice cream and bonbons.

"Nougat!" Gladys exclaimed at one time.

"Chocolate coated nougat with black walnut filling, Yum Yum!"

As the night wore on and the girl's spirits began to droop, they spoke in whispers of the little cottage at the edge of the Ardmore estate where with her own hands Gladys had once prepared a meal for Curlie, and where across from each other over a small table they had eaten the meal together.

"Hot chocolate. Best in the world. And angel food cake. That's what we had that day," exclaimed Curlie.

"Curlie,"—there was a bit of a strain in the girl's voice, "will we ever do it again?"

"Is this an invitation?" said Curlie in a tone of levity that he did not altogether feel. "If it is, then I accept. To be sure we will."

Thus reassured, the girl dropped her head upon her folded arms and fell asleep. There she slept while Curlie, propped up in his place behind the useless rudder, continued to listen and to stare away into the night.

It was strange, mysterious, haunting, this vast Arctic sea that lay all about him. Lapping the shores

of three continents, encompassing the Pole, it seemed endless as he thought of it now.

"And yet," he thought, "off there somewhere, not more than a hundred miles, perhaps not fifty, is a shore. What shore? America? Russia?" he could not guess.

His mind, in dreamy speculation, drifted on. Should the ship fail to find them, would they drift to some shore before starvation claimed them? What chance had they? They would be out of drinking water soon. Would there be rain? He had read of seaplane pilots lost on the sea catching water on the surface of their planes.

"If only rain comes soon enough, and does not bring wind to wreck this frail ship," he muttered.

If they drifted to some barren shore, what then? There would be nesting birds and eggs, fish and seal. He had heard of white men living like the Eskimo, on meat alone. He only half believed it could be done, and shudderingly hoped they would not be obliged to try it.

In the midst of his musing a sound struck his ear, a message from the ship.

"The sixth," he murmured. These six messages had reached him in monotonous regularity. To hear his comrade's voice again and again, to be told to take courage, to be reassured of their prompt rescue, yet to be able to send back not one single word in reply, this was maddening in the extreme.

Always the radio operator gave the location of the ship. When the first two messages came, this fact made no impression whatever on Curlie's mind. On receipt of the third, without really knowing why he did it, he jotted down the reported location of the ship. This performance he repeated upon the receipt of every subsequent message.

"May mean something," he had said to Gladys. "Blessed if I can see what. They're out there somewhere. We're out here. Until they sight us or we sight them, 'never the twain shall meet'."

After the message the sea seemed darker, more silent than before. The few sounds that came to him appeared only to emphasize the silence. Now an eider duck, dropping to the surface for a moment's rest, called to his mate. Now some creature broke the water with a splash.

And now, faint and far away, came the bark of a walrus.

"Going north to his summer hunting grounds," Curlie murmured.

But what was this? He sat bolt upright. The half hour was not up; yet here was a radio message, out of its regular place. A new voice, too. What did it mean?

He was not long in recognizing the voice. "Joe Marion. Good old Joe!" he whispered excitedly.

The messages that came to him in the next quarter of an hour were so thrilling that he thought of waking his companion and inviting her to listen in. But, realizing that in the hours just ahead she would need all the strength she could store up, he let her sleep on.

Joe made his report to the captain. He had captured a large whale and had him securely grounded on the shoals of Farway Rock. He was at once informed of the facts that Curlie and Gladys were missing and that the ship, having abandoned the field where whales abounded, was now engaged in a search for the plane.

Joe assured the captain that he would leave Farway Rock at once and would return to the ship to take charge of the radio.

"Good old Joe!" said Curlie, tears glistening in his eyes. "It was his one fond dream to capture a whale with that crazy boat and wild crew of his. Now he has his whale. He risked his life to take it. Yet he freely abandons it to the mercy of the storms that he may be of some service to Gladys and me. He's the sort of pal men dream of but seldom know."

Again the night grew silent. Rolling slowly up from the sea came the moon, painting a path of gold. In his contemplation of this golden path which seemed to lead straight to land, to warmth, food, comfort and happiness, Curlie fell asleep. When he woke the sun was shining and Gladys was silently laughing at a procession of odd sea parrots who went half swimming, half flying past the plane to their summer home.

"Isn't it queer," she said, noting that Curlie was awake. "There are those odd little creatures, ugly as sin and hardly a bit of use in the world, making

their way with confidence and without the least difficulty to a place they are sure to reach, while we, with all our strength and our splendid minds, sit here quite helpless, and will perhaps continue to sit here until we starve."

"It *is* queer," said Curlie. "Nevertheless, I am sure we will be saved. Our searchers have received reinforcements."

He told Gladys of the message that had come through while she slept.

"Splendid!" she exclaimed. "I'm sure Joe cannot fail us. He never has."

"And now," she chirped quite like a warbling bird, "since we still have some time to wait, will you have three malted milk tablets in your morning beverage, or only two?"

"Make it two. The time may be longer than we think."

CHAPTER XVI

VANISHING SMOKE

That day, as days go upon the sea, was a perfect one. The banks of snow clouds had vanished. Here and there filmy white masses obscured the horizon, but for the most part the sky was clear.

"What a busy place the Arctic Sea is, after all!" Gladys exclaimed after watching the wild life about her.

That was indeed a busy day. Wild geese, flying low, skimmed away close to the water. In a more leisurely fashion pairs of eider ducks of soft and brilliant plumage swam or flew northward. From time to time a great swarm of little auks went flapping and screaming by.

As if disturbed by their clatter, a seal popped his head out of the water to at last lie upon its surface while his beautifully ringed coat got its daily sunning.

"Curlie," said Gladys, "it must be safe enough

here. See how placid the water is. See how contented, how much at home every creature is."

"Yes." Curlie smiled. Then he frowned. "It is quite safe for the present." With wrinkled brow, he was scanning the northern horizon where the mere suggestion of a haze was gathering.

Their most startling visitors arrived just as they were partaking of their noon meal of malted milk tablets. A herd of walrus, huge monsters weighing a ton each with ivory tusks two feet long, came barking and bellowing about the plane.

The girl was at first frightened at these ugly creatures, but Curlie laughed her fear away.

"Harmless. Perfectly harmless!" he explained. "If we were swimming amongst them they would not be likely to attack us. Up here, we are safe."

In this he was quite right. However, he was to learn soon enough that these apparently harmless monsters were capable of bringing disaster to their seaplane.

Like all wild creatures, the walrus has a large bump of curiosity. The seaplane was a novelty in their sea. They were loathe to leave it and quite

determined to pursue their investigation of this fresh phenomenon. Not content to swim about it, barking their astonishment as they went, they began diving head foremost to come up directly beneath it.

Not many moments had passed before there came sounds of dull thumps upon some hollow object. At the same time there ran through the plane a tremor not unlike a shudder.

"The pontoons!" gasped Curlie. "They're bumping their heads upon it. Guess they'll get enough of that soon."

They did not. As time passed, the thumps became more frequent and the tremors more pronounced.

"Playing the game, 'who can bump hardest'," Curlie grumbled. "It won't do. Got to be stopped. A wooden hull won't stand everything."

"This'll fix 'em," he said as he drew an army automatic from a pocket beside his seat. "Didn't suppose I'd need it, but one never can tell."

Taking a careful aim at a young walrus who had at that moment risen in the water, he fired.

Instantly, as if by magic, the monsters vanished; but not quite all. The young walrus, who had received

a mortal wound, wallowed and thrashed for a time in a pool of reddened water, then sank.

So for a considerable time, with seaweed drifting by, with the scream of the seabirds in their ears, with the vast, unending sea all about them, they drifted on.

Then a thing happened that set them tingling with suppressed excitement. A dark cloud, at first so small that it might have been hid by Gladys' little handkerchief, appeared on the southern horizon. They watched it intently.

"Can it be smoke, the smoke of our ship?" This was the unspoken question that filled their minds.

When, after a half hour of anxious watching, they saw that dark cloud break into a whirling, circling streamer, Gladys leaped to her feet with a hoarse cry:

"Smoke! Smoke! It is the ship. We are saved! Why don't you dance? Shout! We're saved Curlie! Saved!"

Curlie did not dance. He did not shout. He, too, was sure now that it was the smoke of a ship. Their ship? Perhaps. Perhaps not. Often, in his many travels on the sea, he had watched a wisp of smoke

rise against the horizon, had watched it grow and extend along the horizon only to at last see it grow smaller, smaller, less and less distant until it at last vanished from sight without giving so much as a glimpse of the ship that had left it trailing behind.

"Yes," he said calmly, "it is the smoke of a ship. No doubt of it. But wait. It is best not to hope too much."

They did wait, and waiting, watched the rolling smoke wax and wane; watched it rise high in air to break and trail away, watched it bunch into a dense cloud only to vanish into nothingness.

When by the aid of his field glass Curlie could see the ship herself, could count her smoke stacks and catch the lift of her plunging prow, even he became confident.

But alas for their hopes, just as Curlie caught one more reassuring message from Joe, who was now on board the ship, they saw the craft slowly turning a broadside to them, then with a majestic sweep, go plowing away to the west.

"Curlie," the girl's voice sank to a whisper, "they —they are going back."

"I am afraid so," Curlie strove in vain to conceal the emotions that surged through his being.

"But Curlie, we could see them. Couldn't they see us?"

"That would hardly be possible. The ship is large and black. Our plane is a mere white speck on the dark old ocean. There are a thousand such specks within sight of the ship, cakes of ice. How could they be expected to tell which one was this plane?"

For a long time after that there was silence. The disappointment of the girl was too great to be overcome. Her father was on that boat, her father and many friends. Food, comfort, the assurance of life and future happiness were there. Her hopes of fulfilling all her cherished ambitions depended upon getting back to that ship, her temporary floating home. She dropped her head upon her arms and wept.

"If only it had been night," Curlie said, "we could have sent up a rocket and they surely would have seen it. In the day time, what was the use? To-night I will try one. They may not be too far away."

On receipt of Joe's last message, Curlie had noted

the position of the ship reported by Joe. Now, as his eyes fell upon it an idea came to him.

From a compartment at his side he drew a small chart of the Arctic Ocean. Having flattened this out, he drew from his pocket the crumpled bit of paper on which he had recorded the ship's various positions and began marking the spots on the map. He had not been at this five minutes when an involuntary exclamation escaped his lips.

Gladys looked up. "What is it, Curlie?" she asked.

"They are circling. See. Here is where they were when they sent the first message; here the second; third; fourth; fifth and so on. Makes a spiral curve, always growing larger, like the dog and deer trails we used to make in the snow. Let me finish it."

"Yes, do!" Gladys bent forward eagerly.

"Here's where they were last," Curlie exclaimed ten minutes later. "And here we are, a little farther north. They'll circle again, a bigger circle. Can't tell how long it will take. Here's hoping they don't give up!

"But they won't," he said quickly, reading consternation on the girl's face. "Your father isn't the kind that gives up."

"No, he isn't."

"They'll reach us all right, unless—"

"Unless what?"

"They—they'll reach us next time. Here's hoping it may be night so we can use a flare."

What Curlie had started to say was that the ship would reach them next time providing the current was not carrying them north at too great a rate of speed. By the marks on the chart he could see that the skipper of the *Sea Bear* had made no allowance for currents. He was simply preparing to cruise the whole area within a certain distance of the spot where the seaplane had last been heard from. Thoughts of the current worried him not a little, but he decided to keep these worries to himself.

"Look, Curlie! Only look!" Gladys cried suddenly.

There was terror in her tone. Not knowing what to expect, he opened his eyes with a sudden start to stare straight ahead.

Had he been allowed to guess, he could not in a thousand guesses have hit upon the passing panorama that hung before his eyes.

"Land!" the girl whispered. "Over there to the left."

Curlie looked. Directly before him, as plain as day, he saw a low shore line, a tundra. This tundra was still covered with ice and snow, and over it, close to the shore, walking in single file and followed by a dozen dog teams, were a hundred large men, dressed in long coats and high caps.

"The Russians," he murmured, incredulous. "A —a whole army of them."

At once he knew that, whatever else may have happened, the men who had left their ship in the dead of winter had not been killed. What had happened to them he could not guess, but some had escaped. They had gone for reinforcements, and this was the answer.

"Curlie," the girl gripped his arm again, "will they get us?"

"I—I don't know," his tone was husky.

"Curlie," her voice was solemn, as if she were

saying a prayer, "Curlie, if worst comes to worst, if you see them coming, coming quite close; if there's no chance, will you—will you—"

The words caught in her throat. He understood, and nodded solemnly.

"But Curlie, look!" The girl whispered shrilly. "They—why, they're gone!"

Curlie stared for an instant. Where there had been a low shore and marching men there was now only boundless black water. He looked intently for a moment, then, to the girl's utter astonishment, burst into loud laughter.

The girl gazed at him in amazement. Then she began beating him on the back as she exclaimed:

"Curlie! Curlie! What is it? You can't have gone mad!"

"No—o," Curlie choked a little, then sobered, "but—but it was so funny, us being so sober and scared, and all for nothing."

"For nothing? Do you mean to say we didn't see them?"

"We saw them right enough, but they may have been a hundred miles away."

"A hundred miles?"

"Sure. It was a mirage. They have them here in the Arctic just as they do upon the desert. Atmosphere makes it possible."

It was the girl's time to laugh, but she did not. The thing had seemed too real. So they sat there in silence, watching the boundless sea.

CHAPTER XVII

"SAIL! HO!"

On board the *Sea Bear* one thought was uppermost in every mind: Curlie and Gladys must be found.

At first the hope ran high that they might at any moment come booming back from the unknown. As hours passed and the roar of their motors failed to sound out over the silent sea, the fear that they were lost had grown into a certainty.

"They're down all right," said the Captain. "You can't trust them flyin' contraptions. All well enough on land, where there are plenty of people, but in this sea ——" He shook his head to emphasize the fact that he feared the worst.

"There was a snow storm at the time," said Kennedy, the veteran seaman. "They might have gone ashore and bumped into Cape Prince of Wales Mountain."

This they had all realized was a possibility. One

of the World flyers had crashed into a mountain in this very region. Only the summer before, a mail carrier had lost his life by crashing into a peak of the Catskills.

There was talk of putting off a land party to search the shores. When the vastness of the Arctic tundea and the mountains beyond was recalled, this project was abandoned.

Every hand was called upon to do his utmost to scour the sea. Mr. Ardmore spent his time in alternately pacing the deck, drinking black coffee, discussing the affair with the captain on the bridge, and in vain attempts to snatch a few moments of sleep.

The captain seldom left the bridge. Besides keeping a watch out for the seaplane, he was obliged to direct the course of the ship. They were in constant danger of collision with floating cakes of ice. A collision with one of these half hidden menaces, which extended so much farther below the surface than above, meant a crushed hull and a lost ship.

Joe Marion, who by the aid of his radio had succeeded in locating the ship and returning to her, never left the radio room.

Watches of all seamen were cut short. They worked in relays, scouring the sea in the motor boats.

Some twenty-eight hours after fear had first been expressed regarding the safety of Gladys and Curlie, nothing had been seen of them. Indeed, no living creature had been sighted.

Then, of a sudden, from the crow's nest there came a cry:

"Sail! Ho!"

"Where away?" boomed the Captain.

"Off the starboard bow."

At once excitement ran high. Some movement of a white object which could not be an ice-pan had been detected by the watch in the crow's nest. Every available glass was brought to bear upon it. The course of the ship was changed. As they came closer, the thing took on a semblance of form.

Discussion ran high. It was the seaplane. Curlie had rigged a sail from the planes and was cruising in search of the *Sea Bear* or of land. It was a boat from the *Adler*. It was some landsman beating his way in a whale boat down the coast.

All too soon the time came when they were obliged

to abandon hope that it was the seaplane. The thing that at last stood out plainly against the sky was a whale boat rigged with a single square sail.

"We'll overhaul them," said the Captain. "They may have news for us, or may at least be able to tell us something of value." In this he was not entirely wrong.

CHAPTER XVIII

A SEA PHANTOM

Again it was night, the brief dark night of Arctic spring time. Curlie and Gladys had sent a rocket curving away into the purple dome of the heavens. It had burst with wondrous brilliancy.

"Oh! Ah!" Gladys had exclaimed.

"They can't fail to see that!" Curlie had declared.

Then together they had kept an eager, tireless watch for the ship. With eyes straining into the dark, longing to catch the first faint gleam of light, they waited. With ears alert for the sound of a creaking yardarm or rattling chain, they conversed in whispers.

So an hour passed. At the end of an hour the girl's head was drooping. The second hour had not passed before she was fast asleep.

Curlie sat bolt upright in his place, listening, looking. Nor was his vigil to go unrewarded.

Just as the moon, a great golden ball, began rolling up the black horizon, Curlie thought he saw some object, looming faint and indistinct against the southern sky.

"Like a ghost, the ghost of a ship," he told himself.

He closed his eyes, to open them again. Was it there? He could not be quite sure. Now it appeared to be there. Now it was gone.

"May be a ship, a real ship. Some sailing schooner bound for northern parts," he whispered. His heart leaped at the thought.

"If it only is," he told himself. "I'll get out a rocket and burn it as a flare. They'd be sure to see it; couldn't help it. And then — " His heart reproached him more than ever at sight of the girl's drooping head. "If only it is. Oh, that it may be— for her."

For a full hour he watched that phantom, — or was it a phantom? As the moon rose higher it brought the thing out in clearer outline; but for all that, it lacked definite form. It was like a clipper ship in full sail.

"Might be, too," he assured himself. "Might be some distance away. There's breeze enough to fill her sails. She might be bearing down upon us. And yet — and — and — "

In spite of himself, overcome by long weary hours of watching, his head fell forward and he slept with his chin upon his breast.

How long he slept, he will never know. Probably not over an hour, for night was still brooding over the sea when he woke.

His dreams of fairer climes and happier hours was broken by a sudden start. He awoke to find himself staring straight ahead to the spot where the phantom had been. The next instant, with beads of perspiration starting out upon his brow, he gripped hard at the metal rim as he muttered low:

"She — she'll run us down!"

For ten seconds this seemed true. Then, with a low laugh, he relaxed. To his startled senses the thing had seemed nearer than it really was. Now, for the first time, he felt sure that the thing he saw was a ship in full sail, that their rescue was at hand. He even went so far as to get out his rocket.

"No," he murmured at last, "not yet. Wait until

they come closer. It will be a surprise, such a surprise to her." His eyes fell upon the sleeping girl.

Eagerly now, he awaited the oncoming craft. "What can she be?" he asked himself. "Can't be a whaler. Whalers don't sail any more. She's like a phantom of one of those splendid old clipper ships that once sailed these seas so bravely."

The thought was so spooky that he felt a cold chill run up his spine.

Shaking himself free from these fancies, he thought what the coming of this ship meant to him, to him and Gladys, to Gladys' father, to the gray haired seamen, to the whole crew. What shouts of joy there would be when the sailing ship came booming along bringing Gladys back to them. How joyously her father would catch her in his arms.

"Oh, that will be glorious! That — why that — "

His thoughts were broken off. There had sounded forth into that silent night such a roaring boom as might have come from a cannon's mouth.

Gladys awoke with a start, to stare wildly about.

"Cur — Curlie!" she cried. "What is it? What has happened?"

"She's blown up."

"Who? Who? Curlie, what's blown up?"

"The ship."

"Not our ship, Curlie. Surely not the *Sea Bear!*" There was anguish in the girl's tone.

"No. Not our ship, thank God! Not that. But it's bad enough as it is. We were about to be rescued. A ship was bearing down upon us, a ship of some sort, and she—she blew up. At least, I think she did."

"Yes, yes, it must have been!" the girl exclaimed, gripping the fusilage of the plane as a great swell lifted the plane high to bring it down with a loud slap. "That was the wave caused by the explosion."

Curlie did not hear her. He was staring with all his eyes at the spot where the phantom schooner had been. In its place were two phantom schooners, each carrying full sail, and each apparently bearing down upon them. They were smaller and narrower of beam than the first, but quite as real.

"Gladys," he said solemnly, "I may have lost my mind. Look where I point and tell me what you see."

"I see two glistening white objects looming up from the sea."

"Ships?"

"They might be. But might they not be icebergs?"

"Ice—icebergs!" Curlie stared; then of a sudden the silence of the night was broken by his loud and merry laugh.

For a moment, scarcely knowing why, the girl joined in the laugh. In the end they both felt better for it.

"You've got a better eye, and a better head than I," Curlie said when he had sobered. "That iceberg had me guessing. I surely thought it was a ship. Who wouldn't? There are few enough icebergs in these waters. Must have come up from Behring Sea."

"But, Curlie, what was that terrible explosion?"

"Only the sound of the bursting iceberg. It split in halves. That's how there are now two."

"It's a good thing," he added, quite soberly, "that we were not alongside when it happened. If we had been, that would have been the end."

CHAPTER XIX

A LIGHT IN THE NIGHT

When the whaling boat sighted from the crow's nest of the *Sea Bear* had come alongside and a rope ladder been let down over the rail, a short, broad shouldered white man dressed in a skin vest and sealskin trousers clamored aboard. He was followed by a swarm of little brown men who formed his crew.

"Thomas Sparks," the short, broad man announced. "Cruisin' for whales. My crew—" he waved an arm at the Eskimos who continued to tumble over the rail onto the deck. "And you?"

"*Sea Bear.* Also cruising for whales," replied the Captain.

"Ah! A whaler! Rare enough these days. Been at the Point twenty years. Came on a whaler myself. Plenty of whales then. Plenty of whalers. Brave days. Gone. All gone." He waved his short arms as if sweeping the sea.

The Captain invited him into his cabin. There Mr. Ardmore joined them. He listened in silence as they explained their present troubles. He was plainly astonished as they told of Curlie's attempt at searching out whales with a seaplane.

"Might work," he murmured.

Ten minutes later, when he might well have forgotten all about whaling with a seaplane, he demanded suddenly:

"What'll one of them things cost?"

Upon being told the cost of a seaplane, he whistled through his teeth. "That's a lot. Can't quite make it this season. Like to try it, though. Take a little time to learn to manage her, I reckon. Not quite like a whaleboat."

"Not quite," agreed the Captain.

"But look here!" exclaimed Sparks. "You say you been cruisin' in a circle? Don't know much about the currents hereabouts, do ye? Me, now, I been up here twenty years. Know 'em well enough. Don't I? Many's the time I've miscalculated and had to tack my boat against the wind and current fer miles."

"How long you say they been missin'?" he asked a moment later. "More than twenty-four hours?"

He figured for a moment with a greasy stub of a pencil on the white tops of his native skin boots, spat at the corner, swore a little under his breath, and exclaimed:

"Fifty miles north of where they dropped down. All of that. Mebby more. You been goin' like this." He drew an imaginary spiral on the table. "All wrong. Should be like this." He brought his thumb about with a bold swoop. "Used to be a mate on a whaler. Many's the night I've spent on the bridge." A dreamy, wistful look came over his wind browned and seamed visage.

"Put him in charge of the night watch," suggested Mr. Ardmore. "He knows these seas."

"Know 'em the way you know your own back yard!" exclaimed Sparks, springing to his feet.

It was late that same night that Gladys, some time after the affair of the bursting iceberg, as she sat staring into the dark, caught or thought she caught the gleam of a distant red light.

"Right over there," she said, growing impatient in her eagerness. "Follow the line of those three bright stars. Right beneath them. Look. Try hard to see it. It is. It must be a light!"

For a long time Curlie strove in vain to see the light. When he at last did see it, he saw two. Then their excitement knew no bounds. The star of Bethlehem could not have been watched with more eager eyes than was that indistinct red glow.

As moments passed the lights grew in intensity.

"It's the ship," whispered the girl, clenching her hands in eager excitement.

When at last they caught the distant clang of a bell, Curlie was ready to concede that it must be some ship.

How strangely mysterious is the approach of a ship in the night! A dim light here, a faint glow there, the clang of a bell, the rattle of a chain, a dim glow from an open door, indistinct noises, darkness all about, a bulk wholly invisible, it seems a craft coming through air from an unknown other world.

It was some time after they had sighted the light that Curlie, having poured some powder from a sky-

rocket upon a metal disc, set fire to it. There followed at once a vivid flash that lighted the sky for many yards around, and sent eider ducks scurrying and a sleeping seal plumping to depths below.

The flash was answered by a red flare. A little later a broad circle of white from a powerful search light began moving about upon the sea.

Then what a thrill as coursed up and down Curlie's spine! How he exulted as the light came near him; how depressed was he when it circled away.

Though the time seemed long, it was in reality only a short while before the blinding light flashed full upon them, then came to rest.

A half hour later, with a cry of joy, Gladys leaped into her father's arms.

For a moment she rested there. Then, remembering Curlie, who stood a little distance away, she whispered to her father: "You mustn't blame him. It wasn't his fault. He behaved grandly. It was truly a wonderful experience.

"And now," she sighed, "I want to sleep for a week. After that we will catch some whales, won't we?"

Some hours later Curlie lay dreaming in his berth

on the *Sea Bear*. In his dream he heard the singing of a wild wind, felt the cold damp of snow and spray on his cheek, felt the rigging of the seaplane on which he rested reel and rock in the throes of a terrible storm. Then, as the whole affair collapsed and he was plunged into the dark, raging sea, he grasped at a broken spar and let out a wild cry.

That cry awoke him. He sat up to stare about him. The singing of the wind in the rigging, his tossing about, the cool damp on his cheek was real. A storm was raging. The ship was plowing through breakers; spray and snow were driving in at his open porthole.

He shuddered at thought of what might have happened. He reached over and closed the porthole. Then, having felt the cozy warmth of his blankets, he drew them closely about him and fell asleep.

At the same time Thomas Sparks, to whom much credit was due for the finding of the seaplane, paced the bridge. Wrapped from chin to toe in his oilskins, he was piloting the ship through the storm. He was destined to remain on the *Sea Bear* many days and to share in the thrills and profits of her further adventures.

CHAPTER XX

A TERRIBLE END

The storm was of short duration. After the storm the sea soon calmed. Under Joe's direction the ship steamed away toward Farway Rock.

"If only the storm has not dislodged our whale and carried him out to sea!" Joe kept repeating to himself as their prow cut the dark waters.

In due course of time Farway Rock loomed ahead. With eager eyes all watched the narrow shore and with joyous shouts they hailed the discovery that the storm had only succeeded in lifting the whale higher upon the rocks. Then what shouting, what tossing of caps as there was. In great astonishment the captain, who came ashore in a dinghy, viewed the monster which the fortunate crew of the skin boat had captured.

At once all was astir on board ship. Lines were strung, tackle set and the whale drawn alongside; cutting in spades flashed, and soon the whales and the

deck were swarming with seamen and little brown men who fairly swam in whale oil.

For this part of the work Joe had little taste. Kennedy was of the same mind; so, since the addition of the boatload of Eskimos left them more than full handed, they picked a crew, lowered a boat and were away in search of the great game.

Nowadluk went with them. Joe insisted on this. "She's as good as any man," he maintained, "and I think she brings good luck."

However that might be, fortune appeared to smile upon them at once. Hardly had they left the ship when Soquina, standing up in the prow, pointed ahead.

"Look!" he said. "Big one, think mine."

The whale, which was close at hand, did not stir until he was struck. Then he went down with such force and turmoil that the boat was near to capsizing.

The dull boom of the bomb sounded, but it did not for one second check the black monster's mad rush. And he was a monster. Kennedy, in low muttered tones, swore he had never seen one so large. In this he was wrong. He had.

Yard after yard of the carefully coiled rope sped

out. The first tub was empty when at last the line slacked.

"There he breeches!" shouted the seaman.

A hundred yards away, like some baffled sea horse shaking foam from his mane, the monster rose straight in air, twenty feet or more. Then like a porpoise executing a graceful curve, he hung for a brief time with heavy flukes in air to at last sink from sight.

The time he was above water was short, not more than thirty seconds at most, yet in that short time Joe had seen that which made his blood run cold. There were strange markings on the great beast's head. He knew them at once.

"Old Dragon Head!" he whispered to himself.

Quickly his eyes were on Kennedy's face. The old man's expression told plainer than words that his keen joy of the chase had not changed a shade. Not a muscle moved.

"Eyes poor," was the boy's mental comment. "Didn't see at all. Suppose I ought to tell him, but I won't." He shut his lips tight, then set his motor to doing quick time, keeping up with the line that once more went reeling out.

His mind was in a whirl. So they were once more hooked to the great whale of the North. What could have happened to their bomb? Had this whale a charmed life? Had it merely glided off his tough old iron sides, or had it, being set at a sharp angle, exploded harmlessly in the water? Whatever it might be, they were shooting ahead at a merry clip.

Many tales were told of this noted whale. Some undoubtedly were pure fiction, but many were well vouched for. The whaleboats and native skin boats he had wrecked were numbered by the score. The list of names of men who had gone to the bottom because of his prowess and strength were appalling.

"Why, sir," one old seaman had said, "there are times when he seems fairly human."

"It's old Dragon Head," Joe thought a trifle wildly. "Suppose I ought to tell? Suppose—"

"Watch out there!" A shrill note of warning came bursting in upon his thought. "Down! Down all!"

As Joe's head went down with the rest his heart skipped a beat. What could it mean? Was the monster upon them? Were his great flukes at this moment hovering above them?

In a second a sound struck his ear — a strange sound to hear on a whaling field.

"Like a volley of rifle shots," his speeding mind registered. "And it is!" Bullets screamed over their heads.

"Down! Keep down all!" Kennedy muttered in a low, tense tone. "It's the Russians. Cut that line, Soquina. There! Now, Joe, without exposing yourself, give the motor all she'll stand. There, there now," he soothed, "we'll give them our wind, leave them behind in a jiffy."

Came another volley of shots, more screaming bullets, a groan from an Eskimo forward; then, save for the purring of the motor, all was silence.

For a time as they ploughed through the water Joe stood the strain. At length, overcome by curiosity, he barely peered over the boat's rim. The exclamation that escaped his lips brought other heads up until at last, forgetting all about their own boat and where she was going, they sat and stared in speechless astonishment at the brief drama that was enacted before their eyes.

By a strange turn of chance, the angry bull whale

had risen close to the boat crowded with Russian soldiers. Upon seeing them, he charged straight down upon them. When within a short distance of them he half turned and, lifting his great hind flippers — massive black lobes of hard muscle and gristle — he waved them on high like flags of death.

Beneath these flukes, in the very shadow of them, and looking very small indeed, was the Russian boat. Its occupants were no longer gripping their rifles. They had seized their oars and were making frantic efforts to escape from that shadow of death.

It was useless. The great beast appeared to taunt them. Did the massive flukes actually follow them? Joe could not tell. He only knew that in the end they began to drop. Then it was that he closed his eyes.

The sound that followed was deafening, like the explosion of a great mine. And like the bursting of a depth bomb on the surface of the sea, the dropping of those flukes created a tidal wave that rocked their boat as it might have been rocked by the after wash of a ship.

When Joe opened his eyes, both whale and boat

were gone. Only a few broken fragments of wood floated here and there.

"No more Old Dragon Head for me," rumbled Kennedy.

"Did — did you know it was he?" Joe moistened his dry lips.

"From the first, son. And you?"

"I — I saw the marks."

"And you didn't tell?"

Kennedy put out a hand to grasp the boy's. "You'd make a capital whaler," he said. There was a note of genuine admiration in his voice.

CHAPTER XXI

WAS IT A WHALE?

The wound of the Eskimo who had received a Russian's bullet in his shoulder had been given a rough first aid treatment by Kennedy. With the motor set at half speed they were circling about. Each circle brought them nearer the ship. All eyes were upon the sea. There was a chance that a second whale might appear.

"Probably won't, though," thought Joe.

They were returning to the ship empty handed. They had lost the whale. But then, who would not expect them to lose that whale? Old Dragon Head! Enough boats had lost him before now. They were lucky to have escaped with their lives.

So thought Joe as they circled homeward. That Russian affair made him feel a little sick. There were other Russians, doubtless many of them. Suppose they should come alongside and demand that the two

young men who had set up the flag on Wrangle Island should be given up. The Captain would refuse, Joe knew that well enough. And what if the Russians, armed to the teeth, should come swarming aboard? What then? A bloody battle. And then? Who could tell? The thing has happened before in the history of the whaling industry. Whaling ships have disappeared from the sea. It has been discovered years later that they had been boarded and carried away by Asiatics. It might happen now. If this did happen —if Gladys—

Soquina, the Eskimo harpooner, broke in upon his thoughts by gripping his arm and pointing away to the windward.

"Sail," he mumbled.

"That's right. Let's overhaul them. What say, Kennedy? Might give us news of a school of whales."

"All right."

The motor sprang into full speed. White foam flew. They gained on the craft by leaps and bounds. She was on a course that cut their own at a sharp angle.

"Should be alongside in fifteen minutes," Joe thought. His eyes sought the sky. His brow clouded.

"Squall coming. Nothing much," said Kennedy.

"Hide 'em from our view."

"May. Stand by. Won't last long."

Suddenly Joe's eyes fairly popped from his head. A wave had tossed the strange craft into clear view. He recognized the build of it at once. It was impossible to mistake it. Curlie and Gladys had described it too plainly for that.

"It's that old white whiskered deaf and dumb man's boat," he told himself. "He's the one sitting in the stern. Can't be any question about that."

At once his eagerness to overtake the craft was increased a hundred fold. He had come up with that strange old recluse of the sea. He would find out things. See if he didn't.

He set his motors to doing their utmost. He steered squarely for the craft which went booming along in a fair wind.

That squall was a tantalizing affair. They were all but within hailing distance when down it came, dampening their cheeks with fine driving mist and blotting out everything save a narrow circle of black water close to the boat.

"Hurry," said Joe.

"Tag along at half speed," said Kennedy. "Won't last a half hour."

Joe set his motor going slow, then settled down to think. He was sorely disappointed because of this sudden arresting of his plans.

There were mysteries which he hoped might be solved by the overhauling of this craft. Just who was this great, white-whiskered man? Why did he haunt the northern seas? What had happened to the Russians after they had disappeared from Wrangle Island and the deck of the *Sea Bear?*

"He'll tell me that, I'm certain," Joe assured himself, "and I will tell him of the Russians killed by Old Dragon Head to-day."

He had a feeling that this old man of the floes would be made happy by this bit of news.

"Perhaps he can tell us whether we are in any danger of attack from the Russians, and if so, how we can escape them," he thought.

In the meantime the cool damp of the storm was upon their brows and the mists of it hung low upon the sea.

A quarter of an hour passed, a half hour. Ten minutes more and the skies began to clear.

"He can't be far from here," said Kennedy, screening his eyes to peer into the disappearing mist.

"It's queer, plumb queer!" he said a moment later. "I'd a swore he couldn't of got that far off. Circle a little, Joe."

The boat started in a slow, broad circle.

"May the black waves swamp me!" exclaimed Kennedy five minutes later when the sky was quite clear. "She must of sunk!"

"Ubagok!" said an Eskimo pointing away to the right.

"That can't be her," Kennedy rubbed his eyes, "that boat's all of a mile away. Power boat; no sails and going, going like the wind!"

What he said was true—at least the last half of it was. The boat was going, going straight on, at a speed that put their motor boat to shame. Yet there came from her no pop-pop of gasoline motor, and she surely carried no sail.

"Ghost of a craft," muttered Kennedy.

"Fairly uncanny," answered Joe.

Soquina, the Eskimo, murmured something about a whale.

As Joe caught the words, he dragged an old pair

of binoculars from underneath the seat and pointed them toward the spot.

He started, then studied the sea with eager eyes. What was that he saw a hundred feet before the strange craft? It was the black head of a whale.

"Look!" he said to Kennedy, "they have harpooned a whale during the squall."

"At the rate they're going they'll be quite out of sight in another ten minutes," said Kennedy.

Reluctantly, with a heavy heart, Joe turned the boat about and headed her for the *Sea Bear.*

"Two wild goose chases in a day," he murmured, "and nothing to show for either of them."

"After all," said Kennedy a long time after, "the question is, who is that strange old man who gets a line into a whale at the most unexpected times?"

To this question Joe had no answer.

CHAPTER XXII

SINKING AT SUNSET

In the meantime, after a long rest, Curlie and Gladys had appeared on deck. It may seem a trifle strange that after the experience they had gone through, their first thoughts should be of the sea-plane. Yet such was the case.

They found her safely housed in the hangar on the after deck. Curlie set about the business of stopping the leak in the petrol tank, while Gladys sought out her father for the purpose of exacting a promise of future trips in *The Gull.*

"Granted," said her father, "only on one condition for the present. You are to use this flying boat of yours as a boat and not as a bird. You must not go too far from the ship, and you must not leave the surface of the sea."

Since this would give him a chance to test out his motors and radio, Curlie accepted these terms. *The Gull* was once more lowered into the sea.

When they started out, the sky was clear and the sea free from ice. They had enjoyed some wild races upon its surface when the same fog that had overtaken Joe and his crew, settled down upon them.

Since this made travel in a seaplane on the surface of the ice-infested sea dangerous, Curlie stopped the motor. Then, with all save a narrow circle of dark waters blotted from their sight, with a great silence brooding over them, they waited the lifting of the fog.

The fog, caught by a sudden breeze, at last sped away, to unveil a glorious sunset.

The setting sun spread the shadow of the seaplane far out over the water. A lone loon, standing half out of the water to stretch his long neck and laugh his weird laugh, cast a shadow rods long.

Some distance to the right there was a great disturbance on the surface of the sea. After a moment's watching, they saw what it was.

An amusing, and yet in a way a solemn scene was being enacted before them. The actors were six great black whales, their stage, the sea. The sun, a red ball, had sunk from sight. The whales, rising in a

row, turned slowly and solemnly over until, like monks bowing before a shrine, they stood head foremost in the water. There for a short space of time they hung motionless, to at last sink from sight.

"Wonderful!" the girl murmured.

"Quite a perfect tribute to something. But what?"

"Don't—don't you see?" The girl leaned far forward to point away beyond the spot where the whales had sunk. "The ship. *Our* ship."

It was quite true. Off there on the horizon was a black ship; very like their own. At that distance it was impossible to tell certainly, but it was fair enough to assume that it was their ship.

Then a great peace came over their hearts. The ship was over there. A long speeding glide and, at any moment they chose they might be among their friends once more. What joy! What perfect bliss! What a contrast to those other hours that now seemed so far in the past.

"Look!" said Gladys. "They're at it again!"

Once more the six monsters were going through their strange ceremony.

"They're doing obeisance to the ship," Gladys smiled.

"They'd better," said Curlie. "The moment we get there we'll send a boat after them."

"But Curlie, look!" Wild terror was in the girl's eyes. She was pointing away at the ship.

The thing Curlie saw seemed unbelievable. He rubbed his eyes, then looked again. As if in answer to the salute of the whales, the great black ship, which lay broadside to them, had tilted stern down in the water until her propeller must be high above the surface.

Gladys knew what that meant, and swifter of thought than her companion, she cried:

"Curlie! Quick! The motor! The boats may be out! We must do what we can!"

While the motors roared the girl watched. Her heart was in her mouth. She had never seen a ship sink at sea. Few ever do. It is a terrible sight. Who was on board? Her father? The captain? Nowadluk, the beautiful Eskimo girl? Joe? Kennedy? Who could tell?

They were coming nearer. The ship was tilted

at a more rakish angle. Would they be in time? No. No! She closed her eyes. When she opened them the ship was gone.

A cold chill went over her. It seemed to her she must faint, yet she did not.

They were coming closer. Hope leaped to life. Something was moving on the water. Was it the boats? Yes, yes, there they were, three of them.

Suddenly the motor stopped, the plane slowed down.

"That," said Curlie, as a queer smile overspread his face, "was not our ship. Our boats are painted white. Those are black."

This startling revelation came to the girl with such a shock that she felt at once a desire to laugh and to cry.

"Why—what—how good it is!" she murmured. "Our ship. She's safe!"

"Over there, I think," said Curlie, pointing away to the horizon where black masts pierced the sky.

"But those poor fellows!"

"Deserve it well enough," said Curlie. "Unless I miss my guess, that was the *Adler,* though how it

all happened, in a calm sea where there's no ice, I can't even guess."

Who can describe the emotions that swept over this boy and girl as they sat there catching the faint pop-pop of distant motor boats that, leaving a spot where once had stood a ship, started for some distance invisible shore. One moment they believed their own ship was sinking, that they were to be left adrift on an uncharted sea with only a strange and unfriendly shore before them; the next they were sure that their ship was safe back there against the blue and that soon they would be with their friends again.

For a time they sat there in silence. Then the motor began a soft purring. Slowly they glided forward until an object floating on the silent sea attracted Curlie's attention. When they had come up to it they found that it was a wooden bucket. And across its side was painted in large letters, S. S. Adler.

"No longer any doubt," said Curlie.

"But what's that great big black bulk over there?" said Gladys, pointing away to the left.

"Why—why, it's a whale! We'll have a look. It's a prize, I'd say. Get a line on it."

Turning the seaplane about, he drove it to a position alongside the whale.

"Whew, what a monster!" breathed Curlie "Never saw one as large, unless—"

He broke short off to stare. The whale was floating half over on his side. The whole top of his head was visible. Traced in bold outline on that head was a figure Curlie had seen before.

"Old Dragon Head!" he whispered. Then huskily, "Let's get out of here!"

The motors purred, they thundered. They were away.

"Curlie," said the girl, when at last the motors slowed down where their own ship loomed, "do you think he was dead?"

"Old Dragon Head?"

She nodded.

"I suppose he was. Wouldn't take a chance, though. Send a boat after him once we are on board." A half hour later a motor boat, in which were Curlie, Joe, the Captain, Mr. Ardmore, Gladys and a full crew of seamen, put away for the scene of the wreck.

They discovered no sign of a wreck, but the black bulk of Old Dragon Head still loomed against the sky. He was at last dead.

As they ranged alongside they saw a harpoon protruding from his side. This, they discovered, was their own shaft—the one Joe had lost when attacked by the Russians. The charge from this harpoon had doubtless brought this terror of the Arctic seas to his death.

But the ship? What of it? Months later they learned from a seaman who had sailed on the ill-fated *Adler* that, as they lay calmly on the sea, a black terror of a whale, such a monster as they had never seen, had come charging down upon them. Driven mad by rage, or by the last throes of death, this monster had come straight on, striking the ship such a blow as burst in her rotten, rust-eaten plates and had left such a hole that an elephant might have been led through it. Then he had sunk from sight. Fortunate was it for the captain and his crew that the motor boats were all on board. They had launched them safely and had put away to the Russian shore where, a short time later, they were rescued by a trading schooner from Nome.

The death of Old Dragon Head and the sinking of the *Adler* appeared to lift the pall of misfortune that had hung over the *Sea Bear,* and brought an end to the series of strange misadventures which had befallen our young heroes and their friends. The captain, who now believed thoroughly in the seaplane as a scout for a whaler, set Curlie and Joe to work in earnest. School after school of whale was sighted, and from each a rich harvest was taken. With the assistance of the Eskimos they were able to carry on the business of trying out and packing down so rapidly that within a month from the time the *Adler* had sunk every cask was filled, every apartment of the hold packed with dark treasure.

It was old Thomas Sparks who exploded one of the most beautiful little dreams that ever flowered in a youthful brain.

"Thomas," Gladys said to him as the three of them, Thomas, Curlie and Gladys stood on the bridge watching for whales, "did anyone ever tame a whale?"

Thomas stared at her as if he believed she was joking. Reading only serious intent on her face, he took the pipe from his mouth to demand:

"Who put that notion into your head?"

"Oh, well—perhaps nobody."

"Well then, mebby you better let 'Oh, perhaps nobody' git it out again, fer there never was no tame whale unless Jonah had one, an' I never could believe that yarn nohow."

After they had indulged in a good laugh, Curlie told of the great deaf and dumb skipper and his dusky crew, and how at times they had seemed to be driving a huge whale as a sea-horse.

"That," said Thomas Sparks, "was old Nord Nordensen. He's a genius for harpoonin' whales an' fer ridin' after 'em after they's harpooned. But he never tamed one, nor not nobody else.

"Old Nord," he went on, "has been up here since the year one. Got his shack up at Icy Cape. Hain't hardly ever there; always away scourin' the ice floes for bears and whales, drivin' that black crew of his like mad."

"Where did he get the crew?" asked Curlie.

"They say that he found them driftin' more'n half dead in a curious open boat. Drifted all the way from some of them southern islands, like as not. Anyway, there they are an' there they stay. They like

old Nord and old Nord treats 'em right. Gives them share and share alike. They're rich, rich in bone an' ivory an' fox skins, them black boys are, every last one of them."

At that Thomas Sparks turned his eyes once more toward the seas. A moment later, his sharp eyes being keener than those of the watch in the crow's nest, he cried:

"Blo-o! Blo-o! Nor—northeast. She's a bow-head!"

The third day after the *Sea Bear* left the whaling field she anchored off Cape Prince of Wales. There it was that Joe, with a real feeling of sadness, parted with his good Eskimo pal, Nowadluk, and with the rest of his crew.

Having ascertained the needs of the little hospital, the *Sea Bear* went nosing her way round Cape Prince of Wales, bound for Nome, a hundred and fifty miles southeast, where many of the supplies desired at the hospital were sent back on a small motor boat. On board their ship was a rich harvest which, in time, would go far toward relieving the needs of the primitive people in the land of the long night.

So, with rigging aflutter with flags, and cabins

overflowing with joyous chatter, the *Sea Bear* lifted anchor and steamed away toward San Francisco. The cruise had been a grand success. Seven gray haired men were young again; a needy cause had been served, and three young landlubbers had become brown and hardened seamen.

Mr. Ardmore, Gladys, Curlie and Joe left the slow-going *Sea Bear* at Nome and took the fast passenger boat for the "Outside."

It was late Autumn in the Arctic now. Soon the ice would close in upon all and nine months of isolation begin.

The decks were swarming with eager-faced, happy people. They were going "Outside." Some, like our young friends, had spent but one winter in this little, shut in world. Two sour-dough miners had been here since '97, the time of the gold rush. Some had been here a long time, some shorter, but on every face was an eager, joyous smile. They were going "Outside." Outside to the world of sunshine and flowers, to the land where blizzards do not howl round the cabins nor dogs howl their midnight dirge, back to a land where filmy silks flutter in

balmy breezes and little birds chirp their merry songs all day long.

Yes, they were going "Outside." They were glad. But as Gladys watched their faces, as the shore line faded away in the distance, she surprised there many a wistful, yearning look.

"Yearning for what?" she asked herself, for deep down in her soul she felt that same yearning for the dark, long, long night, the golden moonlight, the glorious sea, the wild chase, adventure, mystery, thrill, romance.

"Curlie," she said, with a note of eagerness in her tone, "do you think we'll ever come back?"

So it is with all life. We suffer, are cold, hungry, in pain; our lives are at times in peril, and yet, when it is all over, when we lie upon downy couches listening to the song of birds, dreaming romantic dreams of those times of discomfort and danger, we long for their return.

Curlie did not answer at once. He, too, had left the call of adventure that might some day draw him back.

"Not soon," he said at last, shaking himself free from the spell of the North. "At least, not this year.

I like variety. If I have another trip within the next twelve months it will be to a land of perpetual summer, where in midwinter one basks in the sunshine on golden sands."

He was right. That was the sort of land he was to visit. There beneath fronded palms, on coral reefs and little whispering isles, he was once again to experience romance, mystery and adventure. If you would know all that came to him there you must read our next book, "Whispering Isles."

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